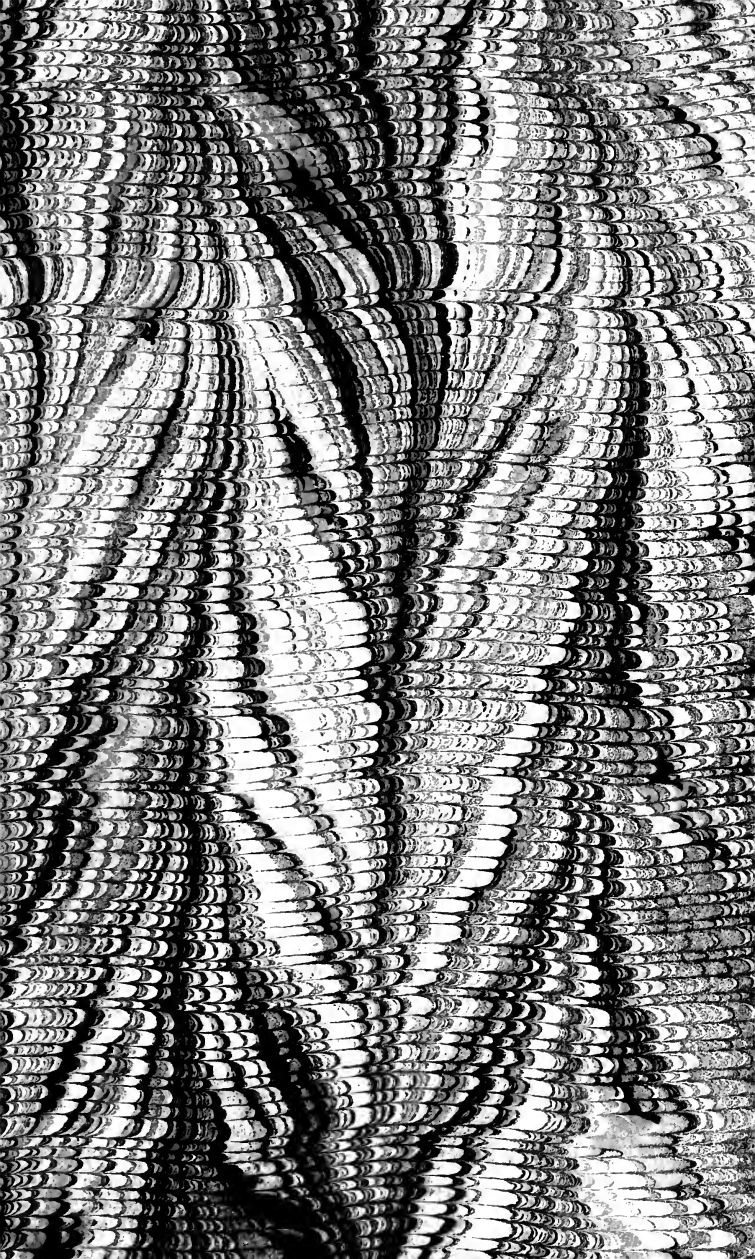


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THE
PARSON'S DAUGHTER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
“ SAYINGS AND DOINGS,” &c. .

“ One child he had, a daughter chaste and fair,
His age's comfort, and his fortune's heir.
They called her EMMA:—”

PRIOR.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

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THE PARSON'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

“ What was the message I received ?
Why certainly the Captain raved
To dine with her—and come at three ;
Impossible !—it can't be me—
My Lord's abroad—my Lady too,
What must th' unhappy Doctor do,
' Is Captain Cracherode here pray ?— No !
Nay ! then 'tis time for me to go.' ”

SWIFT.

It may easily be imagined that Fanny lost no time in communicating to Emma Lovell the interesting and conclusive conversation which she had had with Lord Weybridge. She knew too well the real cause of her fair friend's illness, not to be fully aware of the most essential remedy for effecting its cure. She understood the art of “ ministering to a mind diseased,” and earnestly pressed upon Miss Lovell the advantages

of a return to Binford ; for although other reasons had been given to inquiring friends, Lovell was as perfectly aware of his daughter's true motive for quitting the Parsonage and changing the scene of her existence for a short time, as she herself was. Fanny's letter, it was evident, would change the whole complexion of affairs, and the devoted girl would anxiously desire to return to the spot which had derived intense interest, in her mind from an association with Sheringham, and which now, that he had declared himself, would bring back to her thoughts the pleasure she had experienced in his society, and to her hopes the anticipation of future happiness, instead of offering to her recollection only the bitter memorials of departed joy, and the still more painful evidences of his cruelty and falsehood.

Consistency nevertheless, and a regard for outward show, required that Emma's stay at Merringham should be prolonged for a few days. However, the period of what now appeared to her, her banishment from Binford, was ingeniously abbreviated by the alleged impossibility of Mr. Lovell's being absent from his duty on the following Sunday, and there-

fore, on the Saturday next, the Parson and his daughter were to return to their peaceful home.

Lady Frances, who had so entirely rejoiced in the absence of the Lovells during her son's flying visit, felt now perfectly secure of his escape from the clutches of his rural beauty, for she did not know that he had been favoured with a *tête-à-tête*, in his visit to Mrs. Harbottle, nor was she sufficiently certain of the character of his friendship, for that lady, to determine (even if she had known of it) whether he would choose to jeopardize his own pretensions towards her favour, by making a confidence with regard to a purer and more serious passion. But above all was she satisfied that the change of his position and circumstances would produce a corresponding change in his views and feelings, and that the flattery with which he would, as a matter of course, be assailed in brighter spheres and gayer circles, would totally obliterate the recollection which, at parting from her, he had confessed, of his entanglements at Binford, whether in the shape of friendship for the Squire's lady, or love for the Parson's daughter. How far her ladyship was justified in these suppositions, we shall see presently.

Lord Weybridge in passing through Ullsford, on his way to London, staid just long enough to write to Charles Harvey according to his promise, detailing the events of the morning at Binford; and perhaps, if Lady Frances had been permitted to see the letter which her noble son despatched to his young friend, she might have been disposed to doubt the results of his separation from Emma, which she so ardently desired and so confidently anticipated.

“Emma Lovell,” said his Lordship, in that letter—“was not at Binford—she is gone to Merringham for her health—was this necessary to add to the interest I feel for her—how strangely accidents happen and coincidences occur. I saw her not—nor have I written either to her father or herself—but I have had a conversation with Mrs. Harbottle, which decides my fate—yes, Charles—I have owned, admitted, declared my devotion to the dear girl—it is now, as I meant it to be, irrevocable—and lest any unforeseen circumstances should occur, or that, by repetition the conversation I have had with her friend, should lose any of its point or real intention, I here record my reso-

lution, either to marry *her*, or no one else. Keep this letter—register it amongst your archives, and if I am forced or driven by a dangerous and powerful influence, of which I confess I live in dread, into any thing like a dereliction of principle, or the desertion of my resolution, I claim from you, as an act of friendship, the production of this declaration, unreservedly, unequivocally, and deliberately made.

“I would have given worlds to have seen her—to have pleaded my cause—to have received her assent from her own sweet lips—and yet, perhaps, it is better as it is. True love is always accompanied by respect, and restrained by timidity—the sentiment with which this bewitching girl has inspired me, is so intimately connected with those feelings, that if we had met, the chances are, I should have been unable to use the language of adoration, which I should have been most anxious to let her hear, and thus have permitted my expressions to do an injustice to my feelings—Oh! Joy of my life—that I may by faith, constancy, and devotion, at last obtain the blessing of *knowing* myself not indifferent to you.”

It must be confessed that in this part of his communication there is no appearance of lukewarmness nor any symptom of fickleness—in another portion of his letter he slightly touched upon what struck him to be the unhappiness of Mrs. Harbottle, and the “almost” ferocity of her husband. Upon every account however, he was anxious not to excite Harvey’s feelings upon a topic which had already too much interested them; but even beyond the desire he felt to preserve his friend from any decisive step which might produce eventual misery to himself, and dishonour to the being to whom there could be no question he was fervently attached, he was solicitous that nothing should occur which might displace Fanny from the station which she filled in the world generally, and in Binford particularly, inasmuch as he felt how great a consolation her society must prove to Emma, and what an additional support and even respectability were given to her, motherless as she was, by possessing so amiable a friend and so valuable a chaperon as the Squire’s lady.

After having left his letter to be forwarded to Harvey at Mordaunt’s, Lord Weybridge

proceeded on his journey and having slept on the road, arrived early the next day, at the hotel in Brook Street, in which Lady Frances had always occupied rooms, and before two o'clock in the afternoon was seated in the chambers of Messrs. Wickins, Snell, and Sibthorpe, his late noble cousin's solicitors, in New Square, Lincoln's Inn.

It appeared that by the unexpected annihilation of the entire family, the objects of the late Lord's will, were, as had been anticipated, totally frustrated ; the fortune of his second son and his only daughter fell into the general residue, and all the personal as well as real property became George's. His regret for the loss of his relations, however natural a few sighs might be, was not greatly aggravated by finding himself set down for a legacy of five hundred pounds, and his mother, assigned as her share of her nephew-in-law's bounty and remembrance—a mourning ring. The Testator had named two noblemen as guardians of his children, and appointed two executors to his will, which had been made seven years before his death—both of the executors named were dead, and it appeared from some conversation which he had

with Mr. Crabshaw, the tutor to his Lordship's sons, that a short time before his death, he contemplated making a second will and appointing new executors. This, however, he did not live to do, and George, the sole heir-at-law, became possessed of the whole mass of his cousin's property of every description.

He resolved immediately to fulfil his late cousin's intentions with regard to the few legacies which appeared in the will, but with that exception there he stood, who two days before, as a commander in the royal navy, was satisfied that his annual revenue amounted to one hundred and thirty-six pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence, a peer of the realm with a mansion in Grosvenor Square, two country houses in England and one in Scotland, and an unincumbered annual income of forty-six thousand, seven hundred and twenty-five pounds, nineteen shillings, and seven pence—(Vide the last year's accounts).

After a long and laborious sitting with Mr. Snell, a most active and intelligent gentleman, his lordship returned to the hotel, fatigued with details, of which the results only were satisfactory; and tired, like a bee, with

the load of his own honey, threw himself upon a sofa to "think"—

The decencies of society to which his mother so earnestly insisted upon his sacrificing at Binford, would, of course, prevent his proceeding thither again, and hurrying on his union with Miss Lovell; and the dullness and emptiness of London, holding out no temptation to stay in town, gave him ample leisure to reflect upon the one subject nearest his heart, and dearest to his memory.

Long before dinner-time, however, a message arrived from his maternal uncle, Lord Pevensey, couched in the most affectionate terms, and despatched by courier from a place which he had in Buckinghamshire, congratulating and condoling, and begging him not to lose one moment in starting to join the family circle, to which there could be no objection, even in his supposed state of mourning? And before the man, covered with mud and anxiety, who had brought this invitation, could lead his tired horse from the door, a billet, tenderest of the tender, from the Duchess of Malvern, the dear friend of his mother, solicited him to make Rochdale Priory his home for the next few days; as,

although her son the Duke, had not returned from Scotland, where he had gone for grouse shooting, her Grace and the girls would endeavour to make it as agreeable as they could to him; especially Katharine, who would read to him, sing to him, &c. &c.

Immediately following her Grace, "*haud passibus equis*," came a three-cornered note from Lady Gorgon, who, happening to be in London, having only come into town the night before, and being about to quit it the next morning, implored Lord Weybridge to come to them, and dine *en famille*.—They had no servants in London—but if he would——? Maria Jane would break her heart if he refused—and Louisa and Anne would scold her to death for not being warm enough in her invitation. And this note was signed by all the ladies. A postscript, in one corner, begging him not to mind dressing—"come in your boots:"—in another, "not a soul but yourself:"—in a third, "*come, come, come*," all along the bottom.

George looked first at one of these, and then at another, and then at the third. Were these the people who formerly had driven their daughters into corners, when he approached?—

Was this the lady who had even ordered her porter to exclude him from her house?—Were these the relations who had scarcely ever invited him into their doors?—Was this the Duchess who once actually forced the Lady Katharine, of whom she now spoke so particularly in her letter, to quit his side, after he had led her to dinner, in order that she might sit by *the* bachelor Marquess of the season?

“To my uncle,” said Lord Weybridge to himself, “I certainly will NOT go; and Rochdale is too far from town—but I think a party *en famille* with Lady Gorgon, would be good fun—at least, as much of fun as I ought to enjoy in my present season of mourning—thither I *will* go.”

Accordingly, having sent off negatives to his rural friends, he wrote an affirmative to her ladyship's invitation, taking her at her word that there were to be no strangers, and that he might come in boots.

Nobody could imagine, who did not know, the state of effervescence into which this brief answer of Lord Weybridge threw the whole family. More like Fates than Graces, the three daughters of Lady Gorgon had been, first

one, then the second, and lastly, the third, dragged about to every possible place—balls, concerts, parties, dinners, fêtes, *dejeuners à-la-fourchette*, and *dejeuners dinatoires*.—They had acted in private theatricals—stood and sat in *tableaux*—been all over the continent—at all the best watering-places, in the best seasons. Two of them had been down in the diving-bell at Plymouth—the third had volunteered an excursion in a balloon;—Maria-Jane had given the Loyal Horsemonger Troop of Yeomanry a standard, worked with her own fair hands. The heads of all the three had been examined by Deville—they had climbed poles, and swung on sticks under Captain Clias—they all painted and lithographed—all spoke six living languages, and understood three dead ones—they all sang—and all played—and all danced—and all did every sort of curious work—and they all of them stuck prints on boxes with varnish—and all understood conchology, and ichthyology, and erpetology, and botany, and chemistry—and all had albums—and all collected autographs—and they all admired Pasta—and they all delighted in Switzerland, and adored Paris—they all loved yachting, and they all idolized the

lakes—they were all enthusiasts, and all sympathetic in their tastes. But with all this, they remained, at the period of Lord Weybridge's arrival in London, precisely what they had been in the beginning—the three Miss Gorgons.

The provoking part of the affair was—for what pleasure is there without a drawback?—that there was no opportunity for display—not one trunk, except those containing the ordinary run of drapery, was unpacked; and the graces had to appear before their visitor in all the disadvantages of a *deshabille*: a trial to which the goddesses, who confidently anticipated the fall of their Paris, with great difficulty submitted: but, as Lady Gorgon said, he had seen them often enough before; and they might rely upon it, with a man of his Lordship's turn of character, mental attractions were those which would most decidedly ensure success.

“And now,” said Lady Gorgon, “before we go to make ourselves ready for dinner—dress I certainly cannot call it—let me entreat you to recollect what is, I believe, within the reach of one of you. You are charmingly cordial with each other; and it is delightful to see such unanimity. Indeed, I must say, there is not a

mother in the world happier in her children than I am. But you ought to remember, that, however much you may all admire Lord Weybridge, only one of you can possibly marry him. And therefore, if, in the course of the evening, he should evince any thing like a preference, I am quite sure the good sense and good feeling for which you are all remarkable, will teach you so to arrange yourselves, as not to thwart or break up any conversation or little party he may make. I have so far broken my word with him about strangers, that I expect Count Alouette and young Dol-drum. I thought it would be better to have somebody upon whom you might fall back, in any case of emergency."

"Oh," said Maria Jane, "I assure you mama, I have no disposition to interfere with Anne or Louisa: only, certainly he *was* very attentive last year; and if you had given him any encouragement, instead of actually prohibiting him the house——"

"—— My dear child," said Lady Gorgon, "how could I foresee—he was not within three lives of the peerage?—two of them certainly better than his own—and he had literally

nothing to live upon. Your fortunes—very respectable for gentlewomen, I admit—are, in the world, nothing. And it is not in the world as it is in grammar, where two negatives make an affirmative—two nothings never make any thing.”

“Oh no,” replied Maria Jane, who seemed rather inclined to stickle for precedence, agreeably to her seniority; “of course one could not know—only—all I meant was, it was a pity—because he really is a very charming person—so *very* agreeable.”

“I remember, thinking, him delightful,” said Anne, “that day at Lady Mallerton’s breakfast.”

“Well,” said Lady Gorgon, “in conclusion, all *I* mean is, that with the extraordinary friendship which has so long existed between me and dear Lady Frances, I should consider myself extremely fortunate indeed, to have him for a son-in-law; but I never will force any thing of the sort; I am sure it never answers—it must all come naturally, and so I shall let things take their chance—only what I intend to say—and I shall never touch upon the subject again—is, that I believe he is timid and shy,

and extremely delicate in his opinions about women, and if—he should find us agreeable and pleasant, and suitable to him, I should not like him to be driven away by any little *tracasserie* or idleness on the part of any one of you which might unsettle and disturb him; so now, come, let us get ready for dinner, for we have not a minute to lose.”

Thus saying, her ladyship led the way from the drawing-room, and the graces proceeded to their several apartments to prepare for the meeting which they fully believed to be fraught with consequences of the greatest importance to their future hopes and prospects.

The silvery bell of the clock on the chimney-piece had scarcely sounded seven, when the ladies re-appeared in the drawing-room.

“Do come here, Anne,” said Lady Gorgon; “what *has* your maid been doing with that head of yours? why, I never saw—here, let me just turn that curl—there, so—why my dear child, what a horrid pimple you have got on your cheek; and, Maria-Jane, now do let me beg of you not to sit directly under the lamp—with light hair it won’t do—it won’t upon my word. Louisa, my dear girl, *you* are not

looking well—I don't know what it is—I suppose it is the travelling—or the sea—or something, but—

The drawing-room door opened ; Mr. Doldrum, was announced.

“ How d'ye do, Henry,” said Lady Gorgon ; “ how's Lady Doldrum this evening.”

“ Better, I thank you ;” replied Doldrum, who of shy young men was the shyest ;—he bowed to the girls and blushed. Maria-Jane held out her hand to shake hands with him—take it he *did*—but shake it he did not.

“ This is very good natured of you Henry,” said Lady Gorgon, “ to come on such short notice. Maria-Jane said she was sure you would not mind.”

“ Oh no !” said Doldrum, and again he blushed.

“ There is nobody in town, I suppose,” said her Ladyship.

“ No, nobody ;” echoed the young gentleman.

“ We came through the city last night from the country ;” said Anne, “ and there were a great many nobodies there, for we could hardly get along.”

“ Yes ; a great many ;” observed Mr. Doldrum.

“ You know Count Alouette, don't you,” said Maria-Jane.

“ Yes, very well ;” said Doldrum, “ that is, I never was introduced to him ; but I have met him about a good deal.”

“ He is everywhere,” said Lady Gorgon ; “ and a charming person he is—he is coming to us to-day—he—”

Count Alouette was, at the moment, announced ; and to be sure, as a contrast to the visiter who had so recently preceded him, nothing could be more remarkable. The one, red-cheeked, round-faced, heavy, dull, and awkward ; the other fair, pale, light, gay and airy ; his eyes sparkling with animation, and his countenance beaming with good sense and good nature.

“ My dear Lady Gorgon,” said the count, whose accent gave a naiveté and piquancy to the merest common-places,—“ I am so shocked to be so late—dis comes of having a servant which loves to drive his cabriolet in de afternoon ; my man shall have been to drive some ladi to whom he is fond in his cabb, and not to come back till so late as give me jost ten minute to dress ! how do you do Miss Gorgon

—ah—Miss Anne—to be sure, always well,—always pretty—always pretty well ;—dat is good English—eh ?—

“ How is your beautiful horse, Count ?” said Louisa.

“ Oh, my war-horse as de duke calls him ; he is as well as can be expected. I rode him dis morning. You were not out to-day my lady ?”

“ No,” said Lady Gorgon, “ we are merely passing through town.”

“ Ah !” said the count, “ dat is just the way this time of the year ; every body you meet in de street has jost come to town last night, and is going away to-morrow morning.”

“ That is precisely our case,” said Maria Jane ; “ how long have you been in London ?”

“ Oh,” said the count, “ I came last night—go away to-morrow morning. I have been to Scotland to shoot grose—but I could not stay some time so long as I wish, for I have to make visit at Rochdale next Tuesday, when the duke shall be back.”

“ Is not it getting late Louisa ?” said Lady Gorgon.

“ It is more than half-past seven, mamma,” replied Louisa.

“Do you know Lord Weybridge?” said Lady Gorgon to the count.

“Yes, I did,” said Alouette, “’pon my word dat is very horrible affair—a whole familie *abimé* in dat dreadful manner.”

“I mean the present Lord Weybridge,” said her ladyship.

“No, I do not.”

“We expect him here.”

“Indeed!”

“Oh!”—said Anne, “I’m sure you recollect him, Count Alouette; don’t you remember at Lady Mallerton’s breakfast, I sat between you and him. Lady Harriet sat next you on one side, and I on the other;—and he next me—he was Captain Sheringham, then—”

“Oh! Sheringham;—I recollect him perfectly,” said the count, “a very pleasant agreeable fellow. Oh yes, I have met with him—‘fallen in with him’ as he would say in his ship tongue, several times—a very nice person—and *he* is Lord Weybridge—upon my word I am not so sorry for de late lord, as I was ten minutes ago.”

The senior servant of the establishment in town, here made his appearance, to inquire if

her ladyship was ready for dinner—implying thereby, that dinner was ready for her ladyship—and whether her ladyship expected anybody else?

“Yes,” said Lady Gorgon, “I expect Lord Weybridge; we are not ready for dinner till his lordship comes.”

“What can make him so tedious,” said Maria Jane, casting her eyes toward the looking glass, at the same moment giving her ringlets a new twirl round her fingers, and refreshing her lips with a gentle bite.

“Upon my word,” said the Count, whose delight was to make English puns; “I should not think he had just succeeded to his title; he is *de late* lord himself.—Ha! ha! ha!

“I dare say,” said Lady Gorgon, “that he has a vast deal to do—an accumulation of family papers to look over—an extensive correspondence to maintain—indeed, coming into a fortune of sixty or seventy thousand a year landed property, at least, is a very serious affair.”

“Agreeable for all dat,” said the Count, “I should like to try.”

“Yes; but a pleasure attended with vast responsibility;” observed her ladyship.

“He is not married,” said Alouette.

“Not he”—“no”—“he is not” “Oh dear no.”—responded several voices in different tones.

“You know Mr. Doldrum?” said Lady Gorgon; just recollecting that he was in the room, and that, however unusual introductions are, as it was out of the season, and the young man was shy and awkward, it might be proper to bring him and the Count acquainted.”

“No!” said Alouette.

The ceremony was performed.

“I think,” said the Count, “I saw you dancing at de last ball of de season, in May fair, with dat beautiful Miss Lillesdale—Ah me! What a woman that is—eh?—did not you find her quite charming?”

“Very,” said Doldrum.

“I think she is so clever, as well as so beautiful.”

“We did not talk much,” said Doldrum, “the figure was very difficult to me, and I cannot do two things at a time well!”

“Oh!” exclaimed Louisa, “then you are

not at all like the Count, for he can do half a dozen things at a time."

"You do me proud Miss Louisa," said the Count, "If I make some smile come upon your pretty face I am too happy;—*toujours gai*, is my motto; what is it in English? something about—ah—I forget de words; but it means what I mean, and I always mean in English if I cannot speak him so well."

Here the clock on the chimney struck eight.

"Isn't it strange that George does not make his appearance," said Lady Gorgon.

"Suppose mamma," said Anne, who was the liveliest of the party, and by far the most active in mind and motion, "suppose you were to let a servant go and tell him we are waiting—you know his hotel is only in the next street.

"I would upon my word Lady Gorgon," said the Count, "and so will you if you haf had no luncheon, nor nosing in the world to eat since breakfast."

"Upon my word I see no harm," said Lady Gorgon, "Henry dear, (to Doldrum) do ring the bell."

"An hour's law," said the Count, "in Sep-

tember is great deal. I am terrified to come so late as I did ; but dis is worse—”

Upon the servant's appearance, orders were given that one of the men should step to Lord Weybridge's hotel—inquire for his lordship's servant, and deliver Lady Gorgon's compliments and say, she had been waiting dinner half an hour.”

“ Don't you think, Lady Gorgon,” said the Count in a droll half supplicating tone, “ don't you think the cook might begin to ‘ dish up ? ’ ”

“ Yes ;—and tell them to serve dinner,” continued her ladyship, “ as for *them*, added she—it sounds extremely fine—but I have nothing in town but a kitchen maid—all the establishment is at Grindells, where I hope Count you will come and see us ; it is a place of poor Sir Alexander's own creation, but it is extremely pretty, and—”

“ Oh, I know it perfectly,” said the Count, “ Miss Anne's drawings make me familiar to him—and I shall be too glad to go—when shall you be there ? ”

“ The week after next I hope,” said Lady Gorgon.

“ Oh do come,” said Maria Jane to the

Count, "I can show you some of the most beautiful shells in the world."

"And I," said Louisa, "have the most perfect love of a garden—to be sure it will be out of beauty at this season of the year."

"Everything what belong to you my dear Miss Louisa," said the Count, "is beautiful always—always."

"You'll turn my poor girls heads, Count Alouette," said Lady Gorgon.

"So as dey are not turned from *me* wen I look to dem, I don't care," said the Count.

"Cruel man," sighed Louisa, affectedly, "to be so indifferent to our utter subversion."

Here a pause ensued, which, in Alouette's presence, was odd enough.

"Have you seen the Steam-coach in the New Road?" said Mr. Doldrum, asking generally.

A general negative was the reply.

"It is very curious," said Doldrum, and sighed.

Another pause. The Count could not joke on an empty stomach. Doldrum could not joke at all. Lady Gorgon began to get fidgetty, and fancy she had been thrown over by the new

Lord. The poor woman cook was in a state of greater agony than any of them, and thought that her *coup d'essai* would be entirely destroyed by the procrastination of dinner, and the girls began to look at each other, and doubt seriously whether their mother had really succeeded in securing the peer at all.

At length the servant returned.

He had been to the hotel. His Lordship had walked away from the door exactly as the clock struck seven, to go to Lady Gorgon's, and had not been heard of since, and his lordship's servant had gone out.

"How very extraordinary," said Lady Gorgon, "surely nothing can have happened to him."

"Perhaps," said the Count, with a comic expression of countenance, which made even the servant burst into a fit of laughing, "perhaps he is Burked, and his body sold for nine pounds."

"Upon my word," said her ladyship, "it is a very curious thing."

"I have heard, Miss Louisa Jane," said the Count, "some of your friends called Lady-killers, but if de Lord-killers are about, what shall become of us."

“ Who is in the hall ? ” said Lady Gorgon.

“ Stephen, my lady,” said the man.

“ Ask him if Lord Weybridge came here — it is quite possible he might have forgotten something — or — yet — and there could be no mistake because he knows the house.”

“ Oh perfectly,” said the young ladies.

This servant was just disappearing when another, announced “ dinner on the table.”

Lady Gorgon hesitated, but Alouette was on the alert, and with all that *gaieté de cœur* which so eminently distinguished him, exclaimed, “ two gentlemen to four ladies — two to two — I shall take my lady and Miss Gorgon. Mr. Dol, Dol, (how d’ye call it,) drom, drum — take de oder two, and wid wide staircase we shall do — tree of a row — come my lady, come.”

They proceeded down stairs, Lady Gorgon distressed beyond measure at what appeared the result either of some unforeseen accident or premeditated affront, and having reached the dinner-room the party seated themselves, their countenances saddened with a gloom which the vivacious expression of that of the Count, who entered upon the task of helping the soup

with the most amiable alacrity, could not succeed in dispelling.

Helped they were, when Stephen, who had been doing duty in the hall, as porter, entered the room to assume the task of waiting, since hands ran short.

“ Stephen,” said Lady Gorgon, the moment she saw him, “ you are sure Lord Weybridge has not been here ?”

“ No, my lady,” said Stephen, “ I am quite sure—that foreign Baron called a little before seven, my lady.”

“ Who is dat,” said Alouette ;—“ Tagan-rag ?”

“ Yes,” said Lady Gorgon.

“ About dinner time always,” said the Count, “ he has a good smell I don't think, eh ?”

“ I said your ladyship was not at home ; and about five minutes afterwards, *that* Captain Sheringham called, who used to call so often last year ?”

“ Captain Sheringham,” screamed Lady Gorgon ; “ why Captain Sheringham is Lord Weybridge, the nobleman for whom we have been waiting ; mercy on us, what did you say to him ?”

“ He asked me, my lady, if your ladyship was at home,” said the man, “ indeed he was a-coming right in, without asking one thing or another, so I said you was out ; and he asked me if I was sure, for he was come here to dinner ; and I said I was sure your ladyship was not at home, and that you did not dine at home ; and then he made a sort of a sniff with his nose, because he could smell the dinner quite plain in the hall ; however I persisted, and so at last of all he said, says he, my lady, ‘ that’s uncommon odd,’ and off out he went like a shot.”

“ Why what on earth could induce you to do such a thing, Stephen ?” screamed her ladyship.

“ Why, my lady, your orders to me when we were in town last year were—says your ladyship to me, says you, ‘ If ever that Captain Sheringham calls when I am at home, say I am out ; and if he calls when I am out, and any of the young ladies are at home, say *they* are out ; and if ever he calls about dinner time, as he sometimes does, never let him in ;” so I did as I was bid.”

“ Bid !” exclaimed her ladyship ; “ and what on earth shall I do ?”

“ Eat your dinner, Lady Gorgon,” said Alouette, “ you can do no good now ; never let nosing at all interfere with de gastronomie : he is gone to one of his clubs to dinner ; he will do very well, and it will all keep till to-morrow. It is a sad mistake to be sure.”

It was so sad a mistake that no dinner was eaten, no wine was drunk, no conversation occurred, and the ladies retired almost immediately after the dessert was put down, each to write a note of condolence and apology. Alouette, who enjoyed the defeat of a plotter and match-patcher, kept his dull friend Doldrum drinking a great deal more claret than either of them liked, and when they went to the drawing-room, they found that the graces had all retired for the evening ; one because she had a violent head-ache, the other because she had been up so late the night before, and the third because she had to get up so early the next morning. Café and Chasse were very soon despatched, and the Count and his heavy-in-hand acquaintance quitted her ladyship's mansion, more diverted with the amusement with which they had provided themselves, than with any which had been

furnished by their dreadfully disconcerted hostess.

Lord Weybridge, who could scarcely comprehend why he had been excluded, having, as Stephen judiciously observed, smelt the dinner, cared little about the mistake, whatever it was ; and seeing two cloaks lying on a table in the hall, and having also just seen a cabriolet drive from the door, and being convinced that there had been other visitors invited, took advantage of the blunder, stepped off, and turning down Grosvenor-street, walked himself down to one of the once fashionably frequented coffee-houses in Bond-street, where it was not likely he should be known, and dined solitarily ; after having done which, he re-walked himself back again to his hotel.

Alouette's delight at this incident is not to be described : to find his old manœuvring friend Lady Gorgon foiled at her own weapons ; her pet lord excluded by a mandate of her own, which, being fulminated against the person of Captain Sheringham, was, according to her own special directions, put in execution against him in his improved state, was much too charming to be enjoyed by himself alone, and he forth-

with proceeded to Crockford's, to disseminate the *bouleversement* of her ladyship's finesse by the plain dealing of her footman ; but he, like her ladyship, was foiled in his game there, for the coffee-room was deserted, and in the morning room, (doing duty at that season of the year in the evening,) one solitary individual only appeared, and he—was fast asleep.

Such are the *contre temps* which sometimes occur in the best regulated families, and such is London in the beginning of September.

CHAPTER II.

“ Should erring nature casual faults disclose,
Wound not the breast that harbours your repose,
For every grief that breast from you shall prove,
Is one link broken in the chain of love.”

LANGHORNE.

LET us now revert for a moment to the country. Four days had elapsed after the departure of Lord Weybridge for London, before the return of Miss Lovell to Binford ; during which four days, Lady Frances had considered it right to seclude herself altogether. Harbottle had two or three male friends shooting with him, and Fanny was left all day to the contemplation of her own thoughts. She, however, diverted her mind as much as possible from her own circumstances, by reading and otherwise employing her time, resolving meekly and patiently

to wait until her husband's temper should amend.

On the return of Miss Lovell, the clouds which darkened the fate of poor Fanny were in some degree dispelled; and if not happy herself, it was delightful to her to see how much happiness she had caused to her amiable friend. The declaration of Lord Weybridge seemed to afford a justification for Emma's admission of an affection for him, and a report which was pretty general in the village, that his Lordship was shortly to return to Dale Cottage, set the heart of the Parson's daughter into a sort of palpitation, to which, before she saw George, it had been a perfect stranger.

Two days more elapsed, and the report still gained ground—Lady Frances, after having exhibited at church on the preceding day, a huge crape bonnet, and a capacious cloak, trimmed with all the emblems of grief, in which it was generally supposed her ladyship herself was personally present, but out of which she did not permit any portion of her face or figure to emerge, admitted Mrs. Harbottle to her sanctum on the Monday, Emma declining

from nervousness to accompany her friend on her visit to the Cottage.

“My dear Mrs. Harbottle,” said her ladyship, in a half-sobbing tone, bathing her temples with Eau de Cologne at the same time, “this is very kind of you. I have heard of your visits, but really the events of the past week have quite upset me. Did you ever hear of any thing so dreadful as the accident?”

“Dreadful, indeed!” said the Squire’s lady.

“Poor dear Lord Weybridge,” said Lady Frances, “was a very eccentric man; he married an immense fortune, but a person of no family: he liked her, and although she was very rich, those who knew him best said that her money did not influence his choice. She was a very odd creature—very odd indeed; the boys were fine lads, and the girl quite charming—with an aquiline nose and an oval face, and intelligent eyes, and a graceful figure, and a charming manner—in short, she was a Sheringham; and to think of their all being lost—at once.”

“It is extremely melancholy,” said Mrs. Harbottle, trying to look serious, and as if she believed in the sorrow of her noble friend.

“And how have you been these last few days,” said Lady Frances; “I must make much of you while I can enjoy your society, for I rather think George is coming here to fetch me away, and carry me with him to his place in Worcestershire, where I imagine, from what I hear, he means to stay till after Christmas; thence I shall go to Grimsbury, according to annual custom.”

“We shall not lose you altogether, Lady Frances,” said Fanny; “it will be really too bad to have made us acquainted with you, and then leave us.”

“Oh, we shall no doubt meet in London in the season,” said Lady Frances; “I have no idea of immediately giving up this place—it is a *pied à terre* for me, and it is quiet, and I like it, and I like all of you here; but of course George’s position is altered, and I suppose he will scarcely return at all after his next filial visit. He is absolutely devoured in London: I heard a day or two ago from a very old friend of mine, Lady Gorgon, who tells me that she and her daughters were *au desespoir* at his being prevented by some important business dining with them, after having promised.

She has three charming daughters, so accomplished and so delightful. Do you know her?"

"No, I do not," said Fanny, which was truth; not but in the days of their unrestricted association, Lord Weybridge had given her and Emma a description of the whole family, which had the effect of entirely overthrowing by anticipation the little scheme of Lady Frances, of endeavouring to impress her friend with an idea that George had "some idea" of making one of them Lady Weybridge.

"I was delighted," said Lady Frances, "to see our dear invalid Emma returned, and at church. What a sweet dispositioned creature it is—so mild and gentle, and so amazingly well regulated. I wonder she doesn't marry."

"Binford is not very prolific in beaux," said Fanny.

"No—not in beaux," replied Lady Frances, "but there are a vast many persons in the neighbourhood who would make suitable husbands for such a girl—I once thought Mr. Harvey was rather touched in that quarter."

Fanny, who knew that Lady Frances never thought any such thing, felt herself grow particularly uneasy.

“ And I really fancied,” continued her ladyship, “ the conservatory scene one night at your house would have produced a *denouement*, and perhaps it did, although poor innocent I know nothing of it, for Mr. Harvey went his way very shortly after that evening, and Miss Lovell went *her* way—another way shortly after that.”

“ Oh, no,” said Mrs. Harbottle, “ Emma is innocent of any attachment to Mr. Harvey ; he told us he thought he had business in London.”

“ And, perhaps, my dear,” said her Ladyship with one of those looks and smiles in which she excelled, “ somebody else thought he had no business *here*. Hearts are strange things—there is no accounting for their waywardness and stubbornness.”

“ There may be no accounting for their waywardness” said Mrs. Harbottle, “ but surely reason, religion and a sense of duty may overcome their stubbornness.”

“ I hope no friend of mine,” said Lady Frances, “ will ever have occasion to make the struggle—however I am quite relieved about our young friend, since you tell me there had been no *tendre* between her and Mr. Harvey—I

did not believe it I confess—for, of course, however, much Mr. Harvey might admire her, with the fortune Mr. Harbottle tells me he has, and the prospects which are before him, he would not think of setting himself down at four or five and twenty with a portionless Parson's daughter."

Lady Frances felt her cheek glow as she experienced a consciousness that she was sailing before the wind, ripping up and cutting down hopes and expectations, fully convinced that every word she was saying *at* Miss Lovell now would be repeated *to* her in half an hour after her visiter's departure.

"I am sure of *this*," said Fanny, "that if Mr. Harvey had been attached to her, and she had smiled upon *him*, he could have done nothing better or wiser than unite himself to a being so good, so amiable, and so charming."

"I don't know Mrs. Harbottle," said her ladyship, "in society a man wants something more than a mere wife—poor Miss Lovell has no place in the world, and Mr. Harvey, though a man of fortune is, you know, in fact nobody—and I don't—see."

"Oh, then," said Fanny, "you think it ne-

cessary in a marriage for the world, that if the woman has no place of her own, her husband ought to be of sufficient consequence to give her one—for it is invariably allowed that however humble the young lady may be who is lifted to the peerage by a husband, provided she is amiable and good, the effect of the marriage is to raise her, without at all degrading *him*.”

“ Yes, my dear Mrs. Harbottle,” said Lady Frances, “ to quote the old proverb, ‘ When the sky falls we may catch larks’—who in the world could anticipate that poor Miss Lovell should be lifted, as you call it, in so extraordinary a manner—peers are not so plenty.”

“ Why,” said Mrs. Harbottle, “ they have increased in number a good deal latterly, and some of *those* at all events might not be disposed to reject so fair an opportunity of happiness.”

“ Ill assorted marriages never succeed,” said Lady Frances—“ and—”

Here the announcement of Mr. Popjoy ended the conversation—that gentleman’s attendance having been deemed necessary by her ladyship, and considered very convenient by himself, ever since the lamentable occurrence which more unequivocally contributed to her ladyship’s hap-

piness, than any thing that ever had yet happened in the course of her noble career, not even excepting the propitious marriage of her ladyship with her ardent and aristocratic husband.

Fanny took her leave, and proceeded homewards, but if the lecture which Lady Frances had read in the carriage to Emma on the evening when they journied together from the Hall to the Parsonage, failed of producing a conviction of her ladyship's sincerity, upon the mind of that amiable girl, the conversation which had just terminated shared a still worse fate at the hands of the Squire's lady—she made every allowance for the plating of sorrow, which the mother of the new Lord Weybridge thought it right to put on, but what with a slight knowledge of the world, a strong insight into human nature, and an intimate acquaintance with the sentiments and character of her ladyship's son, Mrs. Harbottle was so established in her dissatisfaction—to call it by the gentlest name possible—with Lady Frances' attempt at imposition, and the use of a principle of generalizing in order that she might make particular applications, that she felt no desire to repeat her

visit, and rather—placed as she was in the confidence of both George and Emma—hoped that she might not have occasion to receive her ladyship again at the Hall before her departure—for in that particular the straight forward intelligence of Fanny discovered that her going was certain and would take place forthwith, but that her ladyship, unwilling to have it supposed that her love of retirement had, in the first instance, been generated by necessity, or that the relinquishment of “her shady blest retreat,” was consequent upon the change of fortune, in her family, had determined to continue in the nominal occupancy of Dale Cottage for some few months longer.

Yet she *had* one bit of news for Emma—one drop of honey in the midst of the gall—George *was* really expected—this she could confidently communicate to her anxious friend, and *she* who knew more of the real motives by which he was urged to revisit Binford was perfectly assured, that however brief his visit might be, the opportunity would not be lost, and that he would then complete the honourable work he had begun, and repeat to the amiable Miss Lovell and her exemplary father

the declaration which he had as it were, rehearsed to her.

Full of these agreeable anticipations, the Squire's lady drove her pony phaeton back to the Hall, whence she dispatched a short, but very expressive note to the Parsonage.

At dinner, Harbottle appeared to have in some sort recovered his good humour—but it was impossible to ascertain his real feelings by his outward appearance, except when violent passion began to display itself—he had shot well—bagged four and twenty brace and a half of partridges, besides hares unnumbered, and rabbits innumerable—his three friends were bad shots, and he had been the crowning sportsman of the day ; altogether he was almost good tempered, and inquired with considerable affection after Emma—talked over the follies of Lady Frances, and concluded by hoping the Parson's daughter would become Lady Weybridge.

And what could prevent it?—apparently nothing.

George having received Lady Gorgon's explanatory letter, and three minutely explanatory *letterettes* from the girls, found himself tied to London for a week by inevitable

business—he went no where—he avoided his family—he shirked society—he lay concealed, thinking not of the wealth and importance to which he had succeeded, for himself—but really and truly only as they would eventually contribute to the happiness and comfort of his dear Emma—What was the next step he proposed? The instant that he could shuffle off the trammels of occupation, it was his determination to return to Binford, in the way to his place in Worcestershire, whither, as we already know, he proposed his lady mother should accompany him—But be it observed, Binford was by no means the direct road to Worcestershire, and Lady Frances was quite old and independent enough to order her carriage, and pack herself up with her maid and her man, and find her way to Severnstoke House (such was the Worcestershire residence of his lordship called) without either the protection or guidance of its new master. His point, his object, his sole intention in returning to Binford was precisely what Fanny anticipated—under the semblance of fulfilling a duty, he was resolved to accomplish the most ardent desire of his heart, and at the very moment that Lady Frances

was spinning her fragile web to catch the flies of the village, her son was preparing to take a step which would effectually sweep away all the cobwebs from his speculative parent's eyes.

"I have not seen her ladyship," said Harbottle, "since George's accession, unless, indeed, beholding that huge black bonnet and cloak which she brought into her pew yesterday, may be called seeing herself. I suppose, Fanny she is what I call uppish."

"She appears to lament the death of the late lord and his family," said Fanny, before the company.

"I dare say she does," said Harbottle, "as much as I lamented the death of my old uncle in the East Indies, who left me the best part of a couple o' hundred thousand pounds,—I had never seen the old chap; he went out five-and-forty years ago, and took to the trick of shaking the pagoda-tree early in life, and shake he did, till at last he made as handsome a fortune as ever was screwed out of a free-labour population. Bless their brown hearts, they are none of 'em slaves in India. They do their own work, eat their own curry, and smoke their own Chilums; no doubt they do, according to our

accounts here; but I know this, I have got letters from my uncle Alexander Marc Antony Anderson, who at last became what they call resident at Futtymungumleum, in which he tells my father rather a different story. No matter for me. I remember the story in the Roman History, which I sha'n't repeat now; but, as I say to myself, says I, when I cast my eyes round and see all my handsome property—Thompson, arn't those rosewood chairs beautiful, eh? So they are.—Well, I always say to myself, what is it to me? I did not see the blacks work; I don't know whether indigo is planted by slaves or free men, or whether cotton and rice grow without trouble; all I know is, Paxton, Trail, Cockerell, and Co., stumped me up the money: and I declare that if I had shammed sorry when I heard of old Alexander Marc Antony Anderson's death, I should have been as great a hypocrite as—I sha'n't say who, for fear of affronting somebody without meaning it—Ha, ha, ha!"

"The circumstances of Lord Weybridge's death, with his whole family, are certainly very peculiarly affecting," said Thompson.

"I don't see that, T.," said the Squire;

“ help yourself—don’t miss the bottle—that’s my best—I don’t see that. Why the devil should a parcel of English lords go sailing about the Mediterranean in yachts, who had much better live in England? If a man or a woman should be ill—if they find their health benefitted by residing in a warm climate, well and good. Health before wealth, says I. But here was this lord, as well as any of us, posting himself at Malta—you might as well live in a stone-quarry—with a jiggermaree Isle of Wight yacht—hoarding his money—spending nothing at home—draining the country for rents to feed foreigners. I don’t mean to say it’s a judgment, but by Jove I should not be sorry if he had been my nearest relation; and as he isn’t, and as his nearest relation is a deuced good fellow, and my friend, why, to tell you the truth, of the two I am rather pleased at it, than vexed, ha! ha! ha!—pass the bottle.”

“ Lord Weybridge is coming here soon,” said Fanny.

“ Ah! so Hollis told me,” replied the Squire. “ Hollis picks up every thing, somehow. I don’t know how it is—I suppose servants correspond, eh? well now I shall be curious to

see what he does with the Parson's daughter. I'll take long odds he pops. I know if I said so in the hearing of Lady Frances, I should have my head in my hand—eh—snap—bit—whipt off—but I *do* think so—”

“ I should very much rejoice,” said Fanny.

“ That,” said Thompson, “ is the young lady I saw here after church yesterday.”

“ Exactly;” said the Squire. “ She and my wife are as thick as thieves, as the proverb goes; they know each other's secrets, and lay their heads together, to do all the mischief they can. However, it would be a great match for her if it was brought about. He is a good fellow, and she a good girl.”

The turn the conversation had taken proved to Fanny that her husband, for some reason or other, had very much amended his opinion of her; for he never condescended to be what he called playful—and of his jocoseness the preceding conversation is a brilliant specimen—if anything were lurking in his mind; and she left the dinner-table with a feeling of hope that brighter days were in store; that by the very means perhaps through which he had acquired his knowledge of Harvey's indiscretions

with respect to her, he had eventually ascertained the nature and character of her conduct towards him. What it might be she could not exactly understand, but certain it was that something had occurred to calm him, and render him as endurable as he generally was.

A new era seemed to be beginning. The absence of Harvey had lost its novelty; and although she could not avoid thinking of him as a friend—and, as she might think of him—she felt all the pain and anxiety which the measure of separation from him on which she had determined, had in the first instance caused her, amply repaid by the conviction that she had acted wisely, and moreover by the assurance that her husband at length saw her conduct in a similar point of view.

The next day to this of which we are now treating broke up the party at Binford, and the Squire was invited to a day's shooting at Colonel Bradfield's, a neighbour within six miles, where another party were to assemble. This day Emma and Fanny had resolved to enjoy together; and accordingly the Squire having taken his departure, about nine o'clock, on horseback, having sent over his gun

the night before, the ladies abandoned themselves to the agreeable anticipation of Lord Weybridge's visit ; and in a firm reliance upon his lordship's honour, and integrity, and principle, and affection, and the certainty of his redemption of the pledge which he had desired Fanny to give Emma, went into details which would have sounded most unwelcome to the ear of Lady Frances, could she have listened to the discussion. So far, indeed, did their fancy lead them, that even the style of the bridal dress occupied their attention ; and the important question whether there should be favours or not, was debated with an ardour and eloquence well worthy of St. Stephen's Chapel, in its best days, where it is surmised the distribution of favours forms no very unimportant subject of consideration.

These two simple creatures, as Lady Frances held them to be—and if single-mindedness, and a straitforward policy and resolution to do good are characteristic of simplicity, she most rightly judged them—duly appreciated the feelings and sentiments of the lover, whose merits and intentions they were discussing, and an agreeable day they passed. The hours flew, and

still they were talking on the one sweet theme. They had even ascertained—how I do not pretend to say—the day fixed for his Lordship's arrival. Others had heard of it too ; and although he had been resident only for a short period at Binford, it seemed that the trades-people of the place were actively engaged in preparations to give his Lordship an agreeable welcome to Dale Cottage.

It was impossible, in the midst of all this excitement, and the conversations which were going on, that Mr. Lovell himself could remain in ignorance of the real state of the case. Emma had never vainly or idly encouraged the idea that Captain Sheringham was seriously attached to her ; but her watchful parent, who knew the world, felt assured, by the Captain's manner when in his presence, and by his daughter's manner in the Captain's absence, that their acquaintance was not of an ordinary or common-place character. He knew his child too well to scrutinize needlessly into her conduct, perfectly assured that she would never be found erring from the straight path of rectitude. But she had felt it her duty to *him* to explain punctiliously the

whole of her conduct with respect to Harvey, and had the happiness to find that her venerable parent, although admitting the delicacy and difficulty of her interference, entirely approved and sanctioned the course she had at her friend's entreaty adopted.

The discussion of this circumstance it was, that produced a conversation in which the gallant Captain's name was frequently introduced, and the impression upon Lovell's mind at its termination was, that his daughter was deeply interested about the said Captain. He did not feel himself called upon to make any serious observations upon what she had said ; but he, like Lady Frances, dealing in generals, had offered an opinion, that a girl, without fortune or rank, should be careful how she permitted her affections to be gained by a suitor whose means, however honourable his intentions and ardent his affections, were not adequate to the support of an establishment, and who, above all, was the son of a lady whose claims to patrician precedence would render the alliance eminently disagreeable, considering that it would afford neither consolation for her pride, nor alleviation of her poverty.

Emma received these side-winded lectures as her father wished. She restrained every hope, and curbed every feeling which might induce her inclinations to rebel against the soundness of his doctrines and the wisdom of his arguments; and if ever she felt her affection for the only man she had ever loved in her life, getting the better of her resolution, she brought to the aid of her philosophy the vision of the *visage du bois*, with which her noble mother-in-law would receive her, if she rashly consented to become the wife of her ladyship's only son.

Now, however, the case was altered. That son had gone the length of making a proposal—he was now powerful, and wealthy—No longer dependent on his mother, it seemed as if the first act of his new life had been to ratify the preliminaries which had been almost exchanged, I believe, in his old one; and under these circumstances the two ladies felt no hesitation in admitting the excellent Pastor into their confidence and receiving—as could not well be doubted—his entire concurrence in the marriage, and hearing his grateful thanks to heaven that providence, had opened such a prospect of earthly happiness to his beloved and only daughter.

CHAPTER III.

“The morning dawns with an unwonted crimson,
The flowers more od’rous seem ; the garden birds
Sing louder, and the laughing sun ascends
The gaudy earth with an unusual brightness :
All nature smiles, and the whole world is pleased.”

LEE.

THE morning broke beautifully, and the smiles of nature upon the expedition of the Squire seemed somehow to have inspired him with a kindness towards Fanny, which she had hoped, in the consciousness of her own deserts, would eventually return, but the appearance of which she had scarcely anticipated at so early a period.

“Good-bye, Fan,” said Harbottle ; “I’m off—the weather is charming, and if I do but keep up my shooting as I have begun, I shall, I think, take the lead at Bradfield’s.

Good-bye ! I shall be home at the latest by eleven to night, and I will give you a fair report of the day."

" I am glad you return to-night," said Fanny, " for I want you to-morrow to go with me about a subscription for the Infant School."

" Subscription, Fan," said the Squire, " rely upon it I will subscribe to the last farthing, to take care of the poor little brats—I think you will do me the justice to say, as far as money is concerned, you have never found me backward—I'm glad of it, too—it was wanted—you are quite right—so good-bye—give me a kiss, Fan, and I shall be home by eleven—mind, now, nothing shall keep me—indeed, nothing can, for I have no clothes to dress, and no servant—no carriage—nothing but my chestnut, so I am sure to be back—good-bye—good-bye."

And away he went, whistling loudly a favourite air of his, as he descended the staircase ; and having hastily swallowed a cup of coffee, and a slice of toast, he mounted his favourite hack, and started across the country to Colonel Bradfield's.

Doctor Johnson said—as we are told by one of his biographers—that the happiest time in

the whole course of a man's life, was that which he passed in bed, in the morning, after he was awake ; whether Mrs. Harbottle fixed the most agreeable part of a lady's existence at the same period, it is impossible to say ; but certain it is, that the conversation of her husband, and the evidently returning kindness of his manner, afforded her so much gratification, that she felt her mind relieved from the dread which had been hanging over it for several days past, and after his departure turned her damask cheek upon her pillow, and sank into a slumber, such, as in truth, she had not enjoyed during the whole preceding week.

Away went the Squire, whistling and cantering over mead and meadow, stubble and furze ; sure of his chestnut, and careless of everything else. He had, perhaps, been deceived in Harvey, but *he* was gone—that thorn was out of his foot, as he would have said ; and Fanny was a good girl, and so handsome ; Bradfield was a good fellow, and so hospitable, and the day was fine, and the weather was good for shooting, and his spirits were good, and, in short, everything was exactly what it ought to be : and what a happy temper of mind to find

himself in, going to join, as he was, an agreeable party, after his own heart—never, in fact, did he leave home more contented or more comfortable.

“I am rewarded,” said Fanny to Emma, “amply rewarded for all the sufferings I have undergone: William is restored to good-temper, which, of itself, is delightful to me—but doubly so, because I see in the alteration of his manner the effect of a cause—he has undeceived himself with regard to my conduct, and I look forward, at least, to a calm enjoyment of existence, brightened by a participation in your more positive happiness.”

“I called on Lady Frances,” said Emma, “on my way hither, and found her, of course, at home—I felt that I ought to call, that I could not avoid it, and I preferred going alone, because I thought if she opened a series of general observations and remarks, bearing upon her son’s position in the world, I could endure it better without having a witness to the attack, and it turned out I was right.”

“*Did* she touch upon the subject?” said Fanny.

“Precisely as I expected she would,” replied Miss Lovell, “she introduced it apropos to

nothing, and told me that almost the greatest satisfaction she had received in his accession to the title, was derived from the certainty she now possessed that he would be able to marry the person to whom he had for many years been attached—‘a young woman of the very first rank, my dear,’ said her ladyship, ‘whose mother would not hear of George’s pretensions while he was untitled and without an adequate fortune—but now,’ continued she, ‘all will go smoothly; and I think it is such an advantage to a man of George’s grade to marry—it settles him, gives him a character and respectability, and by fixing him at home, makes him a better landlord, a better master, in short a better member of society altogether.’”

“Her ladyship has already mentioned some duke’s daughter to me,” said Fanny, “and as she talks of the highest rank, I concluded she means that——”

“I suppose it must be the Katherine of whom she spoke to me in the carriage that night,” said Emma.

“It matters little whom *she* means,” replied Mrs. Harbottle.

“Yes Fanny,” said Emma, “it does, because

although Lady Frances talks in this way in order, perhaps, humanely, *au fond*, to destroy any hopes or expectations which she may fancy her son's attentions to me, during his residence here, have raised, it is painful for me to see the determination she has formed to lead or direct his inclinations into other channels—he is fondly attached to his mother, and in all she says about his rank and station there is, independent of the interest and influence which she must have over him, so much truth and common sense, that I own I dread its effect upon him when they meet.”

“But, my dear Emma, admitting the power,” exclaimed Mrs. Harbottle, “of what avail can it be—? suppose even that he himself were conscious of the weight of his mother's arguments, and the plausibility of her propositions; he has put it out of his power to yield to them—nay, he has done so, neither blindly nor unequivocally—he has irrevocably declared himself and registered his declaration in the very first moment of his nobility, in order to prevent the possibility of the success of his mother's persuasions or entreaties.”

“We shall see,” said Miss Lovell; “to you,

from whom I have no secrets, I frankly admit, as I have admitted fifty times before, that my future happiness or misery is involved in the result of this attachment, and yet my own mind has been so trained to filial obedience, and I hold the duty of a child to a parent to be so superior to every other consideration, that it cuts me to the heart to think, that my only hope of comfort in this world is grounded upon a son's neglect of a mother's injunctions, and his disobedience of her commands."

"My dear Emma," said Fanny, "we must not refine too much—nobody can deny the reason and justice of your views of parental authority, and filial concession; but when a man has arrived at Lord Weybridge's time of life, he certainly is competent to form a judgment upon a point so distinctly and personally interesting to himself, as marriage. A mother, to be sure, would be justified in interposing advice if she saw a son rushing into a connexion either disgraceful or imprudent; but——"

"——Ah! my dearest Fanny," said Emma, "like all the rest of the world, we are too apt to shape circumstances to suit our own immediate case, and to view them only with our

own eyes. Rely upon it, however amiable you think me, and however worthy I may be of Lord Weybridge's good opinion in your mind, the very case you have supposed exists ; and Lady Frances thinks that nothing could be more imprudent or more disgraceful by way of connexion for her son, than his marrying a poor Parson's daughter."

"Then she must be extremely silly."

"No—proud perhaps, and perhaps not prouder of his title than of her son for himself alone ; and it is natural—call it weakness—it is natural—truth, and innocence, and virtue, and good conduct are not claims upon the aristocracy sufficiently strong to induce it to submit to an alliance so close as marriage—in every grade of society it is the same—suppose, instead of the attachment, to George Sheringham, which I admit, my affections had been obtained by some one equally gifted, equally good, perhaps in every point, excepting rank and station, would not my father have remonstrated, would he not have interposed his——"

"—advice, I dare say," said Mrs. Harbottle, "which you would——"

"—implicitly have followed," interrupted

Emma, “ I should have felt it right to struggle with my feelings, and make them subservient to my duty—how then can I complain if George should act similarly.”

“ He cannot Emma—it is too late,” said Fanny.

“ Believe me no, my dearest Fanny,” said Emma, “ I am the only judge on that point ; I know the generous enthusiasm of his nature, the warmth of his heart, the generosity of his disposition ; he has acted his part towards me nobly, and it becomes me, if occasion calls for it, to follow an example so honourably afforded me. If I can be satisfied, in my mind, that his marriage with me is to cause disunion between him and his mother, it will be my duty, my pride, to make the greatest sacrifice a woman *can* make, and positively refuse my consent to a step which is to break the ties of nature, and separate a parent from a child — I am resolved Fanny.”

“ I give you every credit, dearest girl,” said Fanny, “ for the exalted principle you possess ; for its exercise I am sure there will be no occasion. I have no doubt the Lady Frances will, at first, look grave and even perhaps

scold, but it will wear off—if *she* love her son why mar his happiness—besides *she* herself married for love.”

“ Oh,” said Fanny, “ that’s no rule to go upon ; persons in after life are never more lenient towards the follies of others because they have committed similar follies themselves in their youth. On the contrary, they profess a greater severity, on the ground that they have purchased experience, and are, therefore, entitled to speak strongly. Besides which, although Lady Frances married for love—and hateful to me is the woman who marries for any thing else——”

This was one of those remarks which, in the warmth of eloquence, sometimes are made in conversation and meant to be general, but which, now and then, unfortunately prove unintentionally, extremely personal. Fanny felt it—but she felt that Emma herself never thought of its application, and therefore, as all well bred persons do, she considered the observation as rather complimentary than not, seeing, that if Emma had imagined it possible for her friend to appropriate it to her own case, she would certainly not have made it.

“ ——— She married a man of family, from whom her son obtains a peerage—this makes all the difference.”

“ My dear child,” said Fanny, “ you make me quite angry—you are pleading against yourself, and anticipating results that may never happen.”

“ They must happen,” replied Emma, “ the conversations of Lady Frances have quite prepared me for all that—I plead against myself because I endeavour not to buoy myself up with hopes and expectations, the failure of which would, if I did, make my fate more terrible. I have, however, marked out the line I shall take, and traced the course I shall pursue. I feel myself placed in a difficult position, but I put my trust in that which never yet has failed me, and rely upon it I will do my duty.”

Fanny, it must be confessed, was surprised and almost disappointed at the fastidiousness which her fair friend exhibited upon this point. Fanny's mind and disposition, pure and excellent as they were, had never undergone that discipline to which Emma Lovell's had been subjected under the watchful tutelage of an anxious mother. Fanny had never received that advan-

tage ; and instead of the disinterested devotion which such a parent as Mrs. Lovell had been, instinctively feels for an only child, she had derived from a governess—exemplary of her class—the care and attention which money can purchase, and a conscientious discharge of duty can secure. The difference between the two courses of education it is needless to discuss. The one fitted its object for society adorned with every accomplishment, and regulated by every principle of right, which tuition and precept can instil. The other trained its beloved pupil to the practical knowledge of every religious and social virtue, and transferred the piety and excellence of the parent to the fond and willing child.

And what was the result ? Fanny, tired of her governess, and a home in which her father passed little of his time, accepted Harbottle's offer—certainly not because she loved him with that entirety of affection—that genuineness of feeling—that exclusive love, on which alone, when found, is raised a lovely superstructure of happiness—but because she did not dislike him, and did like the freedom and control which the character of wife would devolve upon her, and because her assumption of that character would

take her from the regular and somewhat tiresome routine of walks, and drives, and dinners *tête-à-tête* with Miss Gubbins, who was just sufficiently advanced in life to regret the days that were past, rather than anticipate with pleasure those that were to come.

Those who marry without loving, and fancy that love will come afterwards, are like sailors who put to sea in a gale of wind, in the expectation of fine weather. Fanny's case was a peculiar one, and involved many palliating and redeeming circumstances ; and above all, whatever might have been her real inducements or provocations to unite herself to such a man as the Squire, she had so admirably conducted herself as a wife, that the greatest credit was due to her, more especially as the course of her married life had been regulated rather by a sense of duty, than prompted by a paramount feeling of affection.

How long the conversation of the two ladies might have continued, it would be difficult to say, had not the entrance of some "callers" put a period to it. Fanny, however, had engaged herself to dine with the Lovells at their usual early hour, as giving her more of Emma's

society, without depriving her father of it; for the aunt, of whom we have already spoken, had been away for a few days during their visit to Merringham, and was not expected to return till late in that very evening.

All that was proposed was performed, and Fanny returned home in better spirits, and happier, in short, than she had been for a long long while. The Squire had not arrived when she reached the Hall. He had no servant with him, except one of his under keepers, who had gone over to Colonel Bradfield's the night before with his gun. This man had already come back, and had reported to his superior, that the day's sport had been excellent, and that his master had outdone his usual outdoings in shooting, and had told him, when he gave him his gun, that he should be home between twelve and one.

It was about that time he returned.

CHAPTER IV

“ Farewell to virtue’s peaceful times,
Soon will you stoop to act the crimes
Which thus you stoop to fear ;
Guilt follows guilt : and where the train
Begins with wrongs of such a stain,
What horrors form the rear.”

AKENSIDE.

“ WHO’S there ?” said Emma Lovell, suddenly awakened from her sleep by some one hastily knocking at her bed-chamber door very early in the morning—“ Who’s there ?”

“ ’Tis I, dearest Emma,” replied a voice, which she instantly recognized as Fanny’s.

It is needless to say how speedily the summons was obeyed. Fanny—pale as death, and trembling from head to foot—tottered into the room, and sank almost lifeless on the bed.

“In mercy’s name tell me,” said Emma, “what has happened. What brings you here?”

“No—no,” said Fanny, “never—never—you must not hear what I have to tell. Give me some water, dear—give me something to hinder me from dying at your feet. Ruin—ruin and desolation have fallen upon us. I must see your father, Emma, as soon as possible—instantly if I can—to him, to him alone can I confide my story, he must hear it.”

“But why am I excluded from your confidence?”

“Ask me not, Emma—it must be so.”

“Has any thing happened to your husband?”

“Happened?” exclaimed Fanny, with a look of horror such as never yet had Emma seen upon her countenance—“No—no—nothing has happened. All I entreat—all I beg, is to see Mr. Lovell. I know his early habits—he is no doubt up?”

“You shall see him instantly,” said his daughter. “But am I to know nothing more?”

“You will know all too soon,” said Fanny.

“ Only let me see your father—confide in him—consult him, and act upon his advice. Oh ! Emma, Emma, into the house I have just left never—never more can I enter.”

“ My dearest friend, calm yourself.”

“ I shall be better—calmer—quite myself—after I have relieved my heart of the horror which oppresses it. Oh ! Charles, Charles—”

Here her utterance was stopped, till her agony was alleviated by a flood of tears. Emma was terrified—her mind was prepared for something dreadful ; but all this agitation—the resolution never to return to her home and her husband, coupled with the name of Charles, disarmed—unnerved her—and she determined to accelerate the interview which Fanny seemed so anxious to have with her venerable parent. To him, thought Emma, she is willing to reveal some horrid history—to him she dare not communicate that, which I may not hereafter hear ; to me, presuming upon our friendship, upon the affection she knows I bear her, she might entrust some secret which I dare not keep, or ask some confidence I may not grant.

Hurrying, therefore, to her dressing-room,

Emma threw on her *robe de chambre*, and flew, rather than ran down stairs, to her father's door, to communicate the unexpected arrival of Mrs. Harbottle, and the urgency of her desire to see him. All was as it should be. Lovell had been up and dressed already more than an hour, and he desired Emma to bring Fanny to him in his own little library.

When Emma returned to her room, she found Fanny kneeling at the foot of the bed, in the act of prayer; but so wild was her look, so incoherent were her expressions, that she could not endure the spectacle presented to her eyes. Question her she dare not, lest she should hear, as she sadly anticipated, the disclosure of some event which, perhaps, might for ever separate her from her much-loved friend.

“My father will see you now, dearest Fanny,” said Emma.

“Thank God for *that*!” sobbed the wretched woman.

“Lean on *me* ;” said Emma. “Come to him—come.”

“Oh !” said Fanny, as she passed along, “what a contrast does this house of piety and

virtue afford, to that which yesterday was mine !”

Again were Emma's ears stung by an observation which pointed, as she felt, but too clearly to the nature of the calamity which she dreaded.

“ Come, come,” said Emma ;—and leaning on her friend's arm, the half-dead Fanny reached the library without uttering a syllable. She threw herself into a chair, and covering her face with her hands—burst into a flood of tears—nobody spoke. Lovell felt that it was best to let her grief have way ; and Emma, adown whose pale cheeks the tears were also streaming, stood by her friend, and cast upon her a look of wonderment and pity, not unmingled with fear for her discretion.

After a minute or two she raised her head—her eyes fastened themselves upon the pious master of the house, and again she relapsed into her former excess of grief.

“ I cannot—cannot speak, it,”—sobbed the unhappy woman—“ Where is Emma ?”

“ Here dear,” said Miss Lovell.

“ You must go—Emma, dearest, you must

leave us," said Fanny. "One—only person must hear it—and that one must be your father. That alone can save me—save me from horror—from myself—from madness."

Lovell motioned for Emma to leave the room. She obeyed, but as she parted with the fevered hand of Fanny, she kissed her forehead, and inwardly feared she had done so for the last time.

When they were alone, Fanny's first precaution was to be assured that it was impossible for human ear to catch the sound of her voice. Her trepidation was such, that with difficulty could she make herself intelligible. Their interview lasted upwards of an hour. What transpired while it endured, it is not for any person, except the parties concerned in it, to know. Fanny unburthened her oppressed spirit; and when she came forth from the library, leading Mr. Lovell into the breakfast-room, (for during the last few weeks he had regained sufficient use of his limbs to move, with assistance, from one apartment to another,) calmness and resignation were painted on her countenance, such as could not have rested there, had Emma's apprehensions been justified; besides, to see her

thus associated with her parent, and led by him into their family circle, at once convinced, and soothed and charmed her. . She scarcely anticipated the events which were so speedily to follow.

Fanny endeavoured to rally her spirits sufficiently to sit at the table while the family breakfast was in progress ; but the effort was too much, and she quitted the room, and went to Emma's boudoir, where she entreated to be left alone : and as she left the parlour, her words to Lovell were—" For all the rest, my best of friends, I trust to you."

" What is the meaning of all this ?" said Emma, when she returned ; " am *I* really not to know ?"

" Eventually, Emma, you will—you must know all," said Lovell ; " but when I tell you that for your friend's sake I am going not only to make one of the greatest sacrifices that can be made by *me*, but that I am going to ask a sacrifice of you, being unable, at the present moment, to tell you my motives for such a course, you will, perhaps, be more discontented still.—In general terms, I can explain the principle upon which I act—to your own good sense,

and your reliance upon my good judgment—putting any thing like parental control at the moment out of the question—I trust for your seeking no further.”

“ You have only to express your wishes, sir,” said Emma.

“ My dearest child I know it,” said Lovell. “ Now hear me.—You already know that our poor afflicted friend has quitted her home, and the protection of her husband. Why she has done so, it is impossible you should know—it is impossible that any body should know. Her reasons are unanswerable—her motives unimpeachable; but such is the world, that though she be excellent and exemplary in every relation of life, the step she has taken, unless she is publicly and evidently supported in it, ruins her eternally. If it were practicable for her to remain in Binford, this house should be her home; but that is impossible. The sacrifice I myself am about, for her sake, to make, is that of your society for a short time. The sacrifice I ask *you* to make to friendship, and the happiness and respectability of your friend is, that you should be her companion in a journey which

she proposes to begin immediately, to visit an aunt in the west of England, whom she has never seen since she was a child, and who has not visited London for upwards of forty years."

"Me!—I take a journey!" said Emma—all her thoughts instantly reverting to the one anxiously looked-for event, that of Lord Weybridge's arrival at Binford.

"I told you I should ask, as well as make a sacrifice," said Lovell; "but the moment I had assured myself that nothing else could save our friend, I resolved on performing *my* share of the duty; I think I shall find no difficulty in persuading you to accomplish *yours*."

"Let me but feel it a duty, sir," said Emma, "and this instant I am ready to undertake whatever you wish."

"It is a matter of duty, Emma," said Lovell; "for I require it of you: but as I am sure your feelings of friendship for our poor friend are warm and enthusiastic, when I tell you that the step I suggest will ensure her respectability, and, no doubt, an affectionate reception at the house of her relation, and that

nothing else, as I see it, can avert a ruin so complete and tremendous in all its consequences, that I dare not contemplate it—I do think—”

“Think!” interrupted Emma, “do not think—be certain, father. Sanctioned by your approbation, strengthened by your support, I would traverse the world for Fanny’s sake. And oh, my dearest sir!” continued she, “what a weight of pain and doubt you have, by those few words, lifted from my heart: knowing the fallibility of our nature, and aware of the trials to which my suffering friend has constantly been subject, I dreaded—”

“—dread, nothing Emma!” said Lovell, “after what I have suggested as the course of conduct for you to pursue, your confidence in Fanny may be as unbounded as your reliance is on me. She is, she must be miserable; but she is excellent in all her views, in all her thoughts. Even at a moment when every passion and feeling, to which human nature is liable, has been called into action, her conduct is above praise. One condition of the journey is, that it must be begun immediately—in an hour—in short, before Mr. Harbottle returns home.”

“Is he not aware——”

“Hush!—no questions, my child,” interrupted Lovell. “In *my* carriage, with *your* maid, and one of *my* servants, you must undertake the expedition. From the Hall, Fanny will neither take servants, nor any thing that ever has been in it. She goes—not for a transient visit, but for EVER.”

“For ever!”

“Aye, for ever,” said Lovell; “and with my sanction, and under my advice——”

“But her husband——”

“Him I shall see after your departure,” said Lovell; “and him I will bring to the opinion which I at present hold: but as you know that I should never deny you any information, which with safety I could impart to you, so you will be satisfied with this assertion: and let me entreat of you—that is, if you undertake this extraordinary journey—that, during its progress, you will not press Fanny upon any subject at all connected with her departure from home. The less she tells you, the better for both of you.”

“My dearest father,” said Emma, in tears, and ready to fall at his feet, “pardon me, pray—pray pardon me—doubt you who could

—and how, of all created beings, I? but one question do answer me. I am sure—quite sure—that our dear Fanny is right—that something terrible has happened—some dreadful quarrel between her and her husband:—and I have no doubt—*no* doubt, dear father, that she has been ill treated, and will be eventually justified in all she does. But do, do tell me—if I may know it—is Charles Harvey in any degree?”

“Emma,” said Lovell, “never name his name to *her*——”

“—I should not have named it now, but that she called on it unconsciously when upstairs, and——”

“Hush! hush! hush!” said Lovell; “if she unconsciously called upon his name, notice it not—neither to her nor to any one else. She must have wandered—she must have been dreaming. Dismiss him from your thoughts, my child:—above all, keep his name from your lips during your progress. Remember, if she speak of him—if she tell you all that *I* know—listen, but urge her not—I have advised her to keep her story secret from all but the one to whom it was necessary she should confide it.

It is a dreadful history, Emma; and you are better without the knowledge of it. She, being sincere, as I know she is, had better not confide it even to you. Thus much, if, as I know you do, you value her happiness dearly, you may tell her, whenever she evinces a disposition to admit you into her confidence. I repeat to you, that I have advised her not to tell even *you*. Having said this, I leave you together, secure in the virtue and forbearance of the one, and in the exemplary principle and devotion of the other. Go your way together—press her to your bosom when you meet again, and say your father has told you, adoring *you* as he does, that you are worthy to be friends eternally.”

This was a trial for female curiosity, far and away beyond the natural interest, which Emma really felt for her friend—she had quitted her home and husband *for ever*; in her mental wanderings she had called upon the name of the man whose name had been not agreeably associated with hers—that name was never to be mentioned to her—and yet she was blameless—and even upon the strength of her separation from her husband, rendered, as her father had told her,

more worthy than ever of being the friend of his darling daughter—this *was* a mystery.

And poor Fanny.—Oh! that we dare contemplate the state of her mind—Oh! that we might enter into all those generous, kindly, womanly feelings, by which the suffering angel was actuated—no one who did not know what had occurred, could even imagine the extent of her sufferings—yet how beautiful is the security of religion—how cheering, how charming the feeling of admiration for the piety of others, to which our smaller pretensions dare not with confidence aspire.

In her own mansion—the scene of wealth, of gaiety, of dissipation, and once of happiness, her mind was distracted—she was fevered agitated, tormented—her heart anxiously beating and almost bursting till she made a disclosure of circumstances the most appalling and distressing—distressing in every point of view—and in the midst of this tremendous whirl of feeling and passion and horror—for there was horror mingled in it—she fled to Lovell—and in the house of that excellent man, strengthened by his support—cheered by his ex-

hortations, and soothed by his condolence, she rested her aching head upon the sofa in Emma's room, and even slept awhile. Such is the tranquil security with which the slumber of the erring sinner is blessed beneath the roof of the truly pious man of God.

No time it appeared was to be lost before the departure of the ladies upon this most extraordinary pilgrimage to Somersetshire. Lovell's carriage which seldom saw the light, but which luckily had conveyed him and his child to Merringham the preceding week, was sooner ready for service than it would have been, if he had not made that excursion. At other periods, sundry of the gallinaceous breed of birds were in the habit of using the outside of it as a resting or roosting place, they being enabled by certain delapidations in the coach house to make good a "settlement" there-upon.

Difficulties seemed to vanish before the required exertions of the establishment, like Alpine snow before the acid of Hamilcar's son, and in less than an hour the travelling chariot of the reverend Rector might have been seen

rolling away from the Rectory door, containing Fanny and Emma inside, bearing also Miss Stevens, Emma's maid, and Wilson, the Rector's servant, without. Lovell bade them an affectionate adieu, and away they went.

CHAPTER V.

—————“ A crowd of thoughts
Doubting, discordant, tumult in my breast,
Unsettling my resolves—what should I think?
Suspicion may enquire, but must not judge.”

MALLET.

WHEN one is engaged simultaneously in three different pursuits, the appropriation of time is somewhat difficult, and at the present moment, having a good deal to say to the reader, I can hardly decide, whether to carry him to London to the hotel, which has the honour of numbering the Right Honourable Lord Weybridge amongst its distinguished inmates, or take him to Dale Cottage whose humble thatch has the supereminent gratification of covering the aristocratic head of Lady Frances Sheringham, seat him in the carriage “bodkinized” between

the two fair ladies travelling rapidly westward, or bring him *tête à tête* with the Reverend Mr. Lovell in the Rectory, and so let him hear the repetition of the very extraordinary and important conversation which took place shortly after Fanny's departure between that Reverend gentleman and the Squire.

According to the order of things by which the world is regulated and arranged, the peer should precede—but

“ When a lady's in the case,
All other things of course give place.”

And accordingly we will first endeavour to find out the subject of Mrs. Harbottle's travelling dialogue with her fair and devoted friend.

It may easily be imagined, that after having taken so decisive a step as quitting her father's house at a moment's notice, to undertake a long journey with an abdicating wife, Emma's anxiety to hear the real cause of such a measure explained was not little. She was assured by the manner in which her excellent parent had urged her to accompany Mrs. Harbottle, that it was right and just that she should do

so, and it was from no feeling of apprehension, as to the appearance, such a proceeding might have in the eyes of the world—of Binford, that her desire for “further particulars” was excited, but she really longed to know for the mere pleasure of knowing, and for the satisfaction of feeling that she was entirely trusted.

Indeed, considering all things, she felt that it was no more than her right to be informed upon every point connected with the separation to the propriety and necessity of which she had—under command—lent the whole weight of her character and countenance—but however just Emma’s feelings might have been, and however undeniable her claim upon Fanny for an entire and implicit confidence, she was not destined to be satisfied during their expedition.

Three or four times during the morning, she had endeavoured to break the ice, but Fanny, who for hours was absorbed in the deepest grief, relieved only by bursts of tears, uniformly checked that disposition to inquire which she saw gradually increasing on the part of her companion. At length Emma having permitted her friend to indulge in her fruitless

sorrow, ventured again to urge her to give her only the outline of the circumstances which had occurred, and which had conspired so suddenly to induce the desperate step she had taken.

“Emma,” said Fanny, “I am conscious—perfectly conscious, that you who have made such a sacrifice for my welfare and happiness—a sacrifice for which no gratitude of mine—no not the devotion of a whole life to *your* service could compensate, are fully entitled to hear every circumstance connected with our journey; but when I declare to you that nothing but horror and destruction could result from the disclosure of any part of the occurrences of last night, I am sure you will place so much confidence in *me* as not to press me to detail them—or, even to allude to them.”

“My father knows them,” said Emma.

“It was absolutely necessary that some one person should be in possession of them,” said Fanny, “else I could not have justified my present conduct—your father, by his age—his character—his profession—by all his virtues—and all his tenderness to error—was the only being I could select for the depositary of my

dreadful secret—a second confidence would be ruinous.”

“But surely, dearest Fanny,” said Emma, “if my father knows the secret, you do not imagine that he will not some day tell me what it is.”

“The day,” said Fanny, “may—must come when it may be told—but better it be for ever buried in oblivion—from these lips never syllable shall be uttered connected with it. I have separated from my husband on account of incompatibility of temper—your father justifies the view I have taken of the case, and as a proof that he does so, and as a pledge to the world of my propriety and innocence in the separation, affords me the friendship and society of his dear and exemplary daughter. The world—if any of the world should trouble themselves to talk or think about me—dare not whisper a syllable to my prejudice. That they should be equally tender to my husband’s character I sincerely wish—we are parted—there is the simple fact—and—I repeat the words—from incompatibility of temper.”

Fanny was scarcely able to maintain her firmness during this attempt at rallying her

spirits, and asserting her fearlessness and independence of the world, and at its conclusion again burst into an agony of tears.

“But,” said Emma, recurring to the subject with a perseverance worthy of a better cause—as soon as Fanny was somewhat recovered—“but surely some other form or ceremony is necessary to effect a separation so entire as you propose, between a married couple, than the mere will of the wife. Mr. Harbottle may—and will, I dare say, follow and claim you from your aunt, and”—

“No, no, Emma, not he,” said Fanny.

“I am sure, Fanny,” said Emma, “that with all his faults, and all his irritability—he is devotedly attached to you—proud of you—and unless something which it is impossible for me even to imagine has happened——”

“There has, there has,” interrupted Fanny, wildly—“my dearest child there has—he never will follow me—he never will see me more—he will learn to hate me—and—there an end—”

“Now,” continued Emma, who in her heart wished to lead her companion into a train of conversation whence she might discover some faint glimmering of hope that an eventual

reconciliation between her and her husband might take place — “in all those *brusqueries* of his, about Charles Harvey——”

“Oh, mercy, mercy, mercy!” exclaimed Fanny, with a wildness in her eyes such as Emma had never yet seen — “Spare me—spare me *that*—never—never repeat that name—oh, Emma—Harvey—Harvey—Harvey.”

Again she relapsed into her former state of wretchedness, leaving Miss Lovell considerably more surprised than satisfied with the talismanic effect which the name of Harvey evidently had upon her companion. It was clear to her that the suspicion which she had all along entertained, that the preceding night's quarrel between the Squire and his lady originated in some observation about her conduct towards Charles, was correct, but she was not prepared to find the lady so violently affected by the mere mention of the name of a man, for whom she had to herself only a few days before, denied any thing like an indiscreet affection, at the moment of all others when she was anxiously vindicating her separation from her husband, on the ground of her own propriety and virtue.

Surely, thought Emma, while Fanny still lay absorbed in her misery—surely she could not have seen Charles Harvey—he could not have visited Binford in her husband's absence—even if he had ventured upon conduct so imprudent and improper after what has passed, she would not have admitted a visit from him—besides, she was at the Rectory untill late in the evening—it was therefore impossible—and so it seemed—and most impossible of all, because the Rector would not have considered a quarrel with Harbottle upon such a subject, a justifiable ground for his wife's abandonment of him.

“Emma,” said Fanny, sometime afterwards, faintly and fearfully, “have I been wandering—talking idly? have I named names—spoken of persons?—I surely have been dreaming—I feel sick and weary—my head is splitting.”

To Emma, it appeared that Fanny was growing delirious—the agony of her mind was visible in the impassioned expression of her countenance, and it was evident that rest was absolutely necessary for her. Emma proposed that they should stay the remainder of the day,

and sleep at the next stage, if the inn promised such accomodation as they might approve of. Her proposition to that effect was received by Fanny with complacency, and the observation which she made in giving her assent, "that now, all places in the world were alike to her," from its character, and the tone in which it was delivered, increased, rather than diminished the apprehension which had latterly been growing in Emma's mind—that Fanny had not confided the truth, or if the truth, not the whole truth of the cause of the quarrel, to her father.

How could such an ungenerous suspicion haunt an innocent mind? the reader will naturally ask. But let him consider the circumstances, and the doubt which hung over Emma, will be found to be extremely natural: Fanny had made her a confidante in matters connected with this very Charles Harvey, of a nature as delicate as they well could be, and still maintain the character of honour and propriety. In the very anxiety she had evinced for his departure, she certainly admitted that she was conscious of some influence which he had over her feelings, and however right and proper the decision at which she arrived might have been,

the very fact of its having been called for, marked a very strong distinction between her feelings towards Charles, and those which she entertained towards the other numerous visitors at the Hall, amongst whom, including Harvey, she should have made no distinction whatever.

It turned out that the inn at which they were next to change, was one of the most comfortable in England. I have my reasons for not naming it, for that might lead to discoveries which I am not over-desirous to have made ; but it was an inn on the scale of accommodation of the Fountains, at Canterbury : the Rose, at Sittingbourn ; the Castle, at Marlborough ; or the Plough, at Cheltenham. Every comfort was in actual readiness, as if the travellers had been waited and watched for ; and Emma found herself, at six o'clock in the afternoon, installed with her suffering friend in a home, made so at the shortest notice, endeavouring, by every exertion in her power, to support her companion ; never, however, I must admit, losing sight of the hope of soothing her into a more communicative state of

mind than that in which she actually appeared to be.

Precisely at the same moment Lord Weybridge in London, cloyed already with the honey of flattery with which he had been most plenteously besmeared from every imaginable quarter, was writing and despatching a letter to his lady-mother, announcing his intention of visiting Binford on the following Thursday—making her the offer of accompanying him on his visit to Worcestershire and desiring, in the most cordial manner, to be remembered to all her friends at Binford, whose kindness he should never forget, &c. &c. &c.

By the same post he wrote to Charles Harvey, to communicate what he had written to his mother, upon the subject of his visit, and announcing to him his intention of being at Ullsford on Wednesday evening, if by so doing he could have the pleasure of his company at dinner there, in order that they might enjoy a little sympathetic conversation, and that Weybridge might judge how far his friend's reason, morality, and philosophy had overcome his mis-directed affection for Mrs. Harbottle.

These he sealed and despatched, and then

proceeded to make preparations for dinner, at which he expected a friend—a friend of his own—who was his friend when he neither *was* Lord Weybridge, nor expected to be Lord Weybridge—a naval surgeon, who had been his messmate in the ward-room of the flag-ship in India—one Dr. MacGopus—for whom he had the warmest esteem and affection, and with whom he constantly quarrelled whenever they met, and as regularly became friends when they met again. He had a high opinion of the Doctor's judgment; a great respect for his honour and principle; upon him he devolved very much of his confidence, and from him derived very much counsel, upon his accession to the title, at which period the Doctor, retired from the service, was laid up in ordinary somewhere in the neighbourhood of the New Road.

The Doctor had his peculiarities. They generally amused George, and sometimes provoked him. In the first place, the Doctor uniformly differed in opinion with every body round him. Shape the question how you might, he always contrived to take a different view of it from every body else. He always met every assertion made with a plump negative, and lastly,

which to a fluent fellow like George, who loved to tell a story, and tell it in his own way, was most provoking;—he had a mode of stopping a narrative—however interesting it might be in its nature—however important in its character, by “*querying*,” the smallest possible details connected with it. However, as he is coming to dinner, his little peculiarities will shew *themselves*; for the fact of George’s elevation to the peerage had not produced the slightest effect upon the Doctor’s conduct and conversation.

As an officer, he was skilful to admiration, and brave to heroism—as a companion he must speak for himself.

“ Well now,” said the Doctor, “ tell me, are you much happier, with all these fine things and fine people about you, than you were in the old craft in India?”

“ Yes,” said Lord Weybridge, “ I am. My increased fortune will increase my means of doing good—and, above all Doctor, it will enable me to marry according to my inclinations.”

“ Oh,” said MacGopus, “ you are going to marry! What will our lady-mother say to that?”

“ Give her consent,” replied George. “ Not that it is absolutely necessary—”

“ Who is the girl ?”

“ The only child of Mr. Lovell, the Rector of Binford.”

“ Oh ! a Parson's daughter !” said MacGopus, cramming a huge load of snuff up his nostrils : “ that won't do.”

“ It will do,” said Lord Weybridge.

“ It won't,” said MacGopus. “ If you marry beneath yourself, you'll break your mother's heart.”

“ If I don't marry Emma Lovell, it will break my own.”

“ Stuff !” said MacGopus, “ hearts never break. How should they ? Nonsense ! No, no—don't think of the Domine's daughter.”

“ When I cease to think of her, may—”

“ Pooh, pooh !” interrupted the Doctor, “ make no professions—take no oaths—the wind *will* change, whether you like it or not. You'll forget her now you're a lord.”

“ There you mistake me.”

“ Not I. I know human nature. What's good for a half-pay commander won't do for a peer of the realm.”

“ Well, I start for Binford on Friday.”

“ What’s Binford ?” said MacGopus.

“ I told you just now,” said Lord Weybridge : “ the place of which Emma’s father is Rector—and where my mother has established herself. I consider that journey as the deciding one of my life.”

“ Pah !” said the Doctor : taking more snuff.

“ I shall start Friday morning.”

“ Stop a minute:—why Friday?—Never start on Fridays. Ships never do, if one can help it. If they do, they are lost.—Well—go on—”

“ Saturday then, if you like. I shall order the britschä to the door at—”

“ What is a britschä ?”

“ The name of the carriage, and—”

“ *Unde derivatur ?*”

“ Oh !—don’t worry me about such infernal nonsense.—Listen.—I shall start about seven—and so get to Oxford about half-past twelve.”

“ Quere now—why do you go through Oxford ?”

“ Why—why—because ’tis the nearest road, and—”

“ Stop a minute—University College is the oldest college at Oxford, isn't it.”

“ I don't know—I don't care. Will you hear me?—From Oxford I get to Chapel-House, through Woodstock—”

“ Ay, I know Woodstock,” said MacGopus. “ Let's see.—Blenheim was built in——”

“ The deuce take Blenheim.—Let me tell you my plan.”

“ Ah—well—give us some wine, my lord.”

“ I don't mean, however, to get to Binford till the next day.”

“ Quere now—what's Binford?” said the Doctor.

“ Why I have told you fifty times every day—the place where our cottage is—and——”

“ Oh—I know.—What did you say the Parson's name was?”

“ Lovell.”

“ Ah—well, go on.”

“ Because,” continued Lord Weybridge, with an ardour ill adapted for the reception of the perpetual checks interposed by his inquisitive and methodical companion, “ I shall, I dare say, meet at Ullsford with——”

“ Ullsford ! quere——?”

“ No.—Hang your queries.—Ullsford is the stage but one before Binford.”

“ And Binford, you said—”

“ Pooh!—yes—fifty times.—I say, at Ullsford I shall meet an excellent fellow—a friend of mine—Charles Harvey—”

“ Harvey!” said MacGopus. “ Ah—fish-sauce—meditations—circulation of the blood—who is Harvey, my lord?”

“ A particular friend of mine, for whom I have the highest regard.”

“ Have you known him long?”

“ Ever since we went to Binford.”

“ Ah! — Binford! — Binford is the place where your mother's cottage is—is not it?”

“ Why—yes, to be sure it is.”

“ Where the Parson lives?”

“ Yes.”

“ What d'ye call his daughter?”

“ Emma.”

“ Emma—!—you'll never marry *her*.”

“ But I will, Doctor.”

“ You never will.—There'll be Old Nick to pay, if you try it.”

“ So you said just now—but I am resolved.”

“ Ah—you think so.”

“ Think so !—Why you’ll drive me mad.—
If I think so, I mean so—and thinking so—”

“ You never will.”

“ Mercy on me !—How provoking you are !
Harbottle himself is not half so tormenting.”

“ Quere now—who’s Harbottle ?”

“ I told you yesterday—the Squire at Binford——”

“ Binford !—Oh, ah.”

“ Now, do contrive to recollect ; or, if you don’t recollect, don’t try to learn the name of any thing.”

“ How should I know about your Harbottles ?”

“ Of course not ; but you can, at least, remember names.”

“ It seems, I cannot. Well !”—

“ Well ! Nothing is well. You never attend to what a man says to you.”

“ Then why do you talk to me,” said MacGopus, giving his lordship an arch look, expressive of his own consciousness, that the peer prized him highly, even while abusing him for his love of minutiae. “ I was always the same ; it is not because you are changed that I can alter,—I am off. When you ; I mean when

your lordship wants me again, send. You know where I live. If you don't send I shan't come. I'm not company for a man in love ; but Emma, you shall never marry ; at least, with my consent."

"Your consent !" exclaimed Lord Weybridge, "who, in the name of all absurdity, ever thought of asking *your* consent ?"

"Why you," said MacGopus, "when you were a youngster you never did any thing without my consent, and many a mast-heading I have saved you, my fine fellow ; rely upon it you had better stick to my advice now. I have no interest in what I say—I want nothing of you, and although I might have called to wish you joy of your elevation, if it is a thing to congratulate you upon, I never should have sought you, if you had not sought me."

"All this I admit," said George, "I admit a thousand obligations, to you—but you *are* deucedly provoking, and that's the truth of it—as for my elevation of which you speak, the accidental circumstance"—

"What do you call an accidental circumstance," said MacGopus, "a lubberly trick of a landsman's sailing boat—a yacht of ninety tons,

could not find sea room in the Mediteranean. *Ay de mi!* as the Spaniards say, what odd notions some people have of pleasure."

"Think of Crabshaw's escape!"

"Ah!" said MacGopus, "who's Crabshaw?"

"Why, I told you, the tutor."

"Ah! I recollect," said MacGopus. "Now what does a tutor of that sort get by way of salary?"

"How should I know."

"Ask your friend the Parson—at—what's the name of the place—at—"

"Oh, the devil!" said George, "you are enough to drive a man mad."

"I will not endanger your lordship's intellects," said the doctor; "good night. You are going out of Town. When you return, you know where to hear of me; but, take my advice, get rid of this Miss—whatever her name is, as fast as you can."

"Never, never, never!" said Lord Weybridge.

"That's a long time to wait," said MacGopus. "Farewell; good night."

Saying which, the lofty monitor retired, much after the fashion of John Kemble (whom

he greatly resembled in countenance and features) making an exit ; leaving Lord Weybridge in a state of fever, brought on by impatience of his friend's anxiety for particulars, and an apprehension that he had offended him by his exhibition of it.

It was now Wednesday evening, and Lord Weybridge had begun to count the hours until he should start for the Rectory. Little dreaming or suspecting what had occurred in the village, so entirely to disorganize his plans and arrangements.—We will leave him, until the arrival of the post the next morning puts him in possession of several facts ; some of which are already known to the readers, and of certain others, which are not.

CHAPTER VI.

———“ How strangely am I tempted
With opportunity, which like a sudden gust
Has swelled my calmer thoughts into a tempest :
—Accursed opportunity !”—

DENHAM.

LOVELL had taken, or rather sanctioned a most important step in his daughter's career through life ; so important, as Emma herself considered it, that she could by no means account for his conduct. But Lovell had yet a duty to perform connected with that step which, be it never forgotten, had for its object, under his auspices, to “ put asunder those whom God had put together ;” and which if not more important, was infinitely more difficult.

He was aware, that when Fanny had—the moment that the Squire quitted the Hall,

early in the morning, with the professed object of returning to Colonel Bradfield's for another day's shooting—quitted it also eternally, she had left a note addressed to her husband, containing the following few but important words:

“ I have quitted Binford *for ever*. To Mr. Lovell I refer you for all further information about me.

F. H.”

This was all—the measure was decisive—its announcement brief. Mr. Lovell felt the extent of responsibility which was left upon his shoulders. If he had differed in the *view* which Mrs. Harbottle took of the state of circumstances, his task would have been less difficult, for *she* was resolved to go, at all hazards and all perils. The moment, however, that he marked his approbation of her decision, by sending his daughter as her companion, he incurred the entire responsibility of an adviser ; and invalid as he was, and unaccustomed to controversial discussions, he felt an internal confidence and even a constitutional strength which he was sure would enable him to vindicate the line he had taken.

Harbottle, however, was not destined to

wait until his return in the evening for the receipt of his wife's note. Hollis, the faithful and active, convinced by his mistress's early departure, her hurried manner, her neglect of Devon's services, and other trifling incidents, which to persons of watchful and suspicious minds, are "confirmations strong as proof of holy writ," that something more than ordinary was about to happen, sent off the note she had left by a special messenger to the Colonel's, with orders to find his master wherever he might be shooting.

The messenger proceeded as directed ; but when he arrived at Colonel Bradfield's, a spectacle far different from one of joy or felicity presented itself.

It appeared, that late in the day preceeding, and just as the party at Colonel Bradfield's were shooting their way home, they fell in with Charles Harvey, who, the reader, will recollect, was staying at Mordaunt's, within four miles of Bradfield's house. His appearance was quite a surprise and an agreeable one to all of the party except Harbottle ; however Bradfield and all his party insisted upon it that he should dine with them ; Mordaunt they knew was gone to town on business, and as

they were only men, Charles need not care about dress—and Harbottle did not dress—and none of them would dress—and he could just as well ride home after dinner as before. Harvey assented.—Harvey and Harbottle met—Harvey felt awkward—why, he could scarcely tell—so did Harbottle; but the awkwardness displayed itself rather to their own consciences than to the observation of the company, and the day passed off admirably.

When they broke up, Harbottle rode home and as we know arrived in safety. So rode Harvey; but to the infinite horror of the assembled party at Bradfield's, at breakfast the next morning, news was brought that his body had been found, with that of the horse on which he rode, dead (the latter, dashed almost to pieces) at the bottom of a gravel pit, in the middle of Broustead Common; a pit which had been recently opened and dug, and of which, consequently, even he who knew the country well, was not aware.—

The lamentations which this melancholy intelligence created were general, and it is scarcely necessary to add that however keen the different members of the party were for the sport of shoot-

ing, an accident so dreadful in its results put a stop to their proceedings. The body of the unfortunate gentleman had been removed to the Half-moon, a public house on the road to Broustead, and a coroner's jury was summoned to hold an inquest on it the following morning.

To moralize upon the uncertainty of life, or enlarge upon the precariousness of existence, would be neither new, nor in this place edifying ; but the effect produced upon the company of which, in high health and spirits, this agreeable and accomplished young man, had not twelve hours before made one, by the intelligence, may easily be imagined ; even Harbottle who with feelings of jealousy rankling in his breast, had learned to hate his society, and fear his influence while alive, appeared overcome by the event, and tears, aye ! tears were seen to roll down his iron cheeks as they related to him the circumstances of finding the body. Such symptoms were not looked for in such a being as the Squire. Those who knew nothing of the real state of his acquaintance with Harvey wondered to see such marks of tenderness, but if they could have known how angrily

they had parted, a cause for their appearance might have been found in a feeling of remorse and regret.

The party at Colonel Bradfields separated ; their diversions were for the present suspended, and each man betook himself to his home. Amongst the number, Harbottle prepared to go his way, when just as he was taking leave of the colonel, the brief note which the active and vigilant Hollis had despatched to his master, and of which we already know the contents, were put into his hand.

Dreadful was the state to which the perusal of this announcement reduced, or rather elevated Harbottle—anger—surprise—remorse—terror all were at once operating upon his mind—what had he said or done—what had been the immediate cause of her flight—not love—not guilt—no—no—the object of her guilty love—as he had deemed it—was dead—was it in an agony of sorrow for his loss that she had fled?—no—*that* could not be, for she could not have known of it—yet she might. It was scarcely possible—whither was she gone—she had no relation but an aunt, of whom she knew nothing—what was he to do—he should

become the bye-word, the mark for scorn to point his finger at—and all that he had dreaded far beyond the loss of her of whom he was so vain—the ridicule of the world—would fall upon him—ridicule—contempt perhaps—but he would undeceive the world, he would exhibit his wife's conduct in its proper point of view—would he?—what had she done—how had she misconducted herself—could Hollis substantiate a crime against her—could he safely attribute to the ill-fated Harvey now stretched upon the pallet bed of the “worst inn's, worst room,” guilt or intrigue?—Hollis *would* say any thing—and with his views of religion and morality would not scruple perhaps to substantiate his evidence by an oath—but what *could* he say?

Lovell was to give him all the intelligence he was to receive about his wife—how was this?—if she had been guilty, she would not have made *him* her confidant—how far had she trusted him—had she betrayed the last night's conversation?—had she proclaimed him?—what?—that he dare not ask himself—his quivering lips, his trembling knees, and his parched throat were all of them proofs how much he dreaded as well as regretted Fanny's flight.

He had not courage to see any of the party—all of whom, as has just been mentioned; were on the point of flying from the centre of affliction—but mounted his horse, and cantered homewards, nearly unconscious of what he was doing.

“Send Hollis to me,” were his first words on his arrival at Binford.

He passed across the hall and through the drawing-room: there lay her work—on a table were her gloves—her writing-desk—the pen with which she had written her last last letter; there were the flowers her hand had placed the evening before, in one of the vases on the chimney-piece—they were still fresh and fragrant, but she that had placed them there, was gone; the book from which she had been reading to him, lay open at the very page where she had ceased, and a copy which at his desire she was making of a drawing of his favourite dog, lay by its side. Base and barbarous as he might have been, the pang he then felt was almost punishment sufficient to atone for all his cruelty to her.

Where was she?—she that he *had* loved—adored—with all the love and adoration of which

he was capable—the pride of his heart, the ornament of his house—gone—gone! and, as she had said, for ever. On his knees would he now have supplicated for hours to see her again in her wonted place—again smiling—again attending to his wants, and even anticipating his wishes. What was to be done?

“I thought it best to send the note to you,” said Hollis; “I was sure my mistress never meant to return.”

“Is Devon with her?”

“No, sir,” said Hollis, “no human being from this, accompanies her, nor did she take with her one single article of dress. She left the house before *I* was up. Devon did not see her before her departure. I heard afterwards that she had been at the Parsonage, and I thought it might be only some early expedition with Miss Lovell, but when I saw the letter I thought differently.”

“Have you enquired how she went from Binford?”

“In Mr. Lovell’s carriage; that I found out at the George. It has not been away more than an hour. I understand they were going towards Bath.”

"Who do you mean by they?"

"Miss Lovell is gone with my mistress," said Hollis.

"Miss Lovell gone with her!"

"Yes—so that any notion of her meeting Mr. Harvey is out of the question."

"Harvey," exclaimed Harbottle, "Harvey—meet *him*! What! haven't you heard—Harvey is dead—a corpse—stiff—cold—Harvey—no! no!"

"Dead!" said Hollis. "What—murdered?"

"No—no!" said Harbottle; "who should murder him?—an accident. His horse, it is supposed, ran away with him on returning from Colonel Bradfield's, last night, and pitched head foremost, with his master on him, into a gravel pit, which has been incautiously left open on Broustead Common."

"Was *he* at Colonel Bradfield's last night?" said Hollis.

"He was."

"And found dead this morning?"

"Yes," said Harbottle; "would he had been dead a year ago."

"Aye, so indeed; and it had been well, and I

believe our mistress would have been here to-day," said Hollis; "but the accident is strange."

"Not strange at all. He had drank much wine—the horse he rode was that bay which he had here—always a runaway—and I suppose, in his harum-skarum way of riding across a country, he pitched into the pit before he was aware of his danger."

"There'll be an inquest on the body of course," said Hollis.

"Of course—to-day. What evidence can be adduced, I cannot see; for who is to be a witness to an accident which happened on a dark night, to a man alone on a heath, it would be difficult to guess."

"That's true," said Hollis; "but who saw him last?"

"That's more than I know," said Harbottle; "it's a bad thing, and a shocking thing, and at any other time I should have felt it more than now; when, besides all other circumstances connected with his name and conduct, I have a sorrow of my own, much deeper than any which the sorrows of others can inflict."

"My advice, sir," said Hollis, "to you is,

in the business, as regards my mistress, is not to disturb yourself about it. Now she is gone I declare, to my mind, I don't believe she ever cared about you—never valued you as she ought to have done. If I were you I would make her a suitable allowance, and live on, as comfortable and as happy as a prince without her."

"Unfeeling scoundrel," said Harbottle, "how dare you presume to utter advice to *me*—a master for whose respectability you have pretended to have a care."

"I spoke but what I thought," said Hollis; "the moment a woman—a lady I mean, I beg pardon—but ladies or not ladies, they are all much the same—shews that she cares nothing about her husband, why then what I say is, her husband—"

"Care nothing. Hold your tongue this instant," said Harbottle; "leave me—get out of my sight; it is to *you*, rather than to your mistress, I owe all this misery—this heap—this accumulation of wretchedness that I feel, and from which all my money, ten times told, can't release me—you, sir, it was, who first excited my suspicions about the unfortunate—poor lost Harvey!"

“ Poor,” muttered Hollis: “ Oh, he pities *him*, and *I* am a scoundrel !”

If Mr. Hollis had not known the violence of his master's temper, and moreover been quite clear as to the side on which his “ bread was buttered,” he would have made that master such an answer as would have astounded him ; but he was a patient creature, he knew into what this fever of temper would subside, and was quite certain that in the next twelve hours he should have the Squire as much under command as ever. Only let the master or mistress condescend to make the servant a *friend*, and the tables are turned in the twinkling of an eye, and the menial ceases to be the inferior. In Hollis's hands, the purse-proud Squire had placed himself ; to him had he humiliated himself even into the requesting, rather than ordering, (for it forms no specific part of the servant's duty,) to pry, and listen, and pick up intelligence connected with the domestic proceedings of his own establishment ; and now because the results of his inquisitorial system had been most calamitous, he found himself at the mercy of the fellow with whose insolence and revengeful

malignity he had the misery of being threatened.

Harbottle—and that astonished his familiar—although evidently shocked and startled by the flight of his wife, was less agitated by that event—which, Hollis thought, would have excited him most violently—than by the death of Harvey, which the same discerning individual seemed to think ought to have had no terrors for him. The Squire, however, resolved upon proceeding to the Rectory instantly, and making such inquiries as he considered necessary as to Fanny's arrangements, and as to the reasons she had given Lovell for her sudden adoption of the measure which she had taken. It is quite possible that he was not himself conscious of all that had passed the preceding evening, and certain it is that he was not prepared, for what he was to hear from the lips of his reverend friend, for whom he had really a great respect, and for whose pious and exemplary character, he perhaps never felt a higher regard than at a moment when he felt himself lowered to a pitch of misery and degradation, hitherto beyond his imagination, and at present far beyond his expression.

He walked to the Parsonage--cursed as he passed his own threshold by the servant who, under his own auspices, had destroyed him--sneered at by his groom-boys, and most especially ridiculed by his housemaids, who peeped from the bed-room windows as he passed along to join in the mockery that was going on below. Of his liability to this sort of observation he was fully conscious, and to its unpleasantness most sensitively alive; and his heart beat, and his cheek blanched, as he approached the shops of Binford, at the doors of which the red-faced bumpkins who owned them, were standing, with the bare apprehension that they might be rude, or cold in their civility, or insolent in their bearing; but little did Harbottle know, however much he gloried in it, of the influence which wealth possesses in a community like that composed of ten-pound householders. The "fat and greasy," and the "great unwashed," bowed and smiled their best, as usual, and as they would have done, if, like Bluebeard, he had cropped his ladies by dozens, and had not been detected. But the bright-eyed wives and daughters of the gentleman "soap and tallow line," hidden behind their muslin

curtains and Venetian blinds, looked on, and, in "their looking, looked unutterable things;" for, be it understood, excellent and exemplary as Fanny was, the female portion of the Binford population had been for the last two years wondering how Mrs. Harbottle could endure such a man, more especially as Mrs. Devon, who was a perfect oracle among the second-rate inhabitants, and who, at that period, considered her mistress quite (as she called her in writing of her) an "angle," related such a collection of *historiettes* connected with the disagreements between her lady and her master, as led them to suppose that a very slight strain upon the cord would snap it asunder.

Harbottle never before, in walking through Binford, felt what he did on that memorable day; nor was the wretchedness of his present feelings at all relieved by the anticipation of the conversation which must ensue between him and the Rector. He turned the different points of the case over in his mind, and resolved, at all events, to rate his reverend friend for permitting his daughter to accompany Fanny, thus lending a marked and important sanction to a step which, at that moment, he was prepared to contend,

nothing that he had either said or done could possibly justify.

In this state of turmoil and agitation he reached the gate of the Parsonage-house. He rang the bell, and was admitted; but such is the peculiar sensitiveness of human nature at certain periods, that he felt a conviction that the Rector's man, who happened to open the door, did not receive him with the same respect which he was formerly wont to use; and when Miss Lovell—the aunt, who had returned the preceding evening to give Emma her holiday—rose as soon as he came into the drawing-room, and said—more coldly, as it seemed to him, than usual—that she would herself go and tell her brother he was there, it struck him that there was an alteration in her manner which nothing, but a family determination decidedly against himself, could have induced.

She did not re-appear; nor did even the Rector's man show himself again; a small whitefaced boy, who was called “page” to aunt Eleanor, the sister, and who, in that character, superseding what commonly-minded persons were accustomed to consider footboys, wore red seams down his pantaloons, and two hundred and forty-eight

white sugar-loaf buttons on his jacket—came into the room, told the Squire that the Rector would be glad to see him, and “marshalled him the way that he should go.”

The Squire entered the library in which his unhappy wife had detailed her sorrows but a few hours before; and Mr. Lovell, having received him calmly, yet coldly, desired that he might not be disturbed while Mr. Harbottle was with him. The pale-faced urchin with the buttons bowed obedience, and the double doors of the sanctum were closed upon the anxious pair.

CHAPTER VII.

“The parent’s partial fondness for a child,
An only child—can surely be no crime.”

SHIRLEY.

THE longest day must have an end. The morning so much wished for, because it was the one immediately preceeding that, on which Lord Weybridge was to start for Binford, dawned—his Lordship rose—dressed, and proceeded to breakfast, when, amongst various letters, from different parts of England, one from his mother, larger in its size, and important in its weight, first caught his notice—he broke the seal, and read:—

Dale Cottage, Monday.

“MY DEAR GEORGE,—News, and of much importance, from a village like this, may be

unexpected—if I suspect rightly, it may be unwelcome. So many events have been crowded into the day that the whole place is literally ringing with them, and so very curious are they in their nature that I scarcely know where to begin.

“ In the first place, prepare your mind for a shock—a serious shock—your friend Mr. Harvey is dead!—killed last night as he was returning to Mr. Mordaunt’s from Colonel Bradfield’s—he and his horse were both found, early this morning, in a gravel pit, which has been recently opened on Broustead Common. This intelligence, I am sure, will agitate and affect you, as indeed it agitated and affected me, not only because I admired Mr. Harvey for his accomplishments and qualities, but because I know he was an intimate and favourite friend of your’s—such however is the fact. The Coroner’s inquest is to be held to-day; but as he was galloping home alone—of course there can be no evidence to shew how the accident occurred, and therefore nothing explanatory of the distressing circumstances can be expected.

“ This melancholy occurrence is to be coupled with another event, wholly unconnected with it,

but which affords an example of those curious coincidences which you and I have so often discussed, as forming a striking part of the romance of real life. Mrs. Harbottle has eloped from the Squire—she went off to-day, about twelve o'clock, nobody knows why—nobody knows whither. She has not taken her own maid with her nor any servant of the house. But there is another circumstance connected with her flight which, perhaps, will interest some people more than the flight itself—she is accompanied in her notable expedition from her home, by your innocent, shy, unassuming, unpretending fair friend, Miss Emma Lovell, who, in the broad face of day, has had the assurance to play companion to a lady running away from her lawful husband.

These incidents, as I have just said, in one day, are tolerably well for a quiet place like this. The Squire was sent for home, after her departure, and returned to the Hall. What steps he intends to take nobody here knows, but at present he has exhibited no inclination to follow the fugitive. I have seen nothing of him, but Mrs. Harbottle's maid has told mine, that he has been raving and storming like a madman all

the forenoon, more particularly since his return from the Parsonage-house, whither he, in the first instance, proceeded to inquire about his lady.

“ I made particular inquiries whether Mrs. Harbottle knew of the fatal occurrence to poor Mr. Harvey before her flight, and I find that she could have known nothing about it—nobody had been to Binford from Colonel Bradfield's till long after her departure, and the Squire himself only heard of it at the moment he arrived to join the day's shooting.

“ If, as is generally whispered here, the lady had made an appointment to meet and go off, or rather go on with Mr. Harvey, the sudden intelligence of his death must have been an awfully serious blow to her. But what puzzles every body is the connivance of the grave, pious, and venerable Parson in the expedition of his daughter in the lady's company. Some people deduce from this event an idea that Mrs. Harbottle has suffered some grievous injury or ill treatment from her husband, and that Mr. Lovell has lent her his daughter's character and reputation to support her in the struggle. This I, for one, do not believe, nor am I at all

sure that the poor old man, even at this moment, knows any thing about his girl's going. At all events, Mrs. Harbottle has one satisfaction with which to console herself; in falling she has pulled down her friend, for I hear that Popjoy's assistant, whom you recollect I recommended as an excellent husband to the interesting young lady, has already declared off; so that you see the Parson's daughter is nearly as much damaged as her imprudent and most probably guilty companion.

“To-morrow or the next day at farthest, I conclude, you will be here, and then perhaps, you may sift out some farther particulars; the sensation created in this monotonous circle is quite extraordinary.

“I have had a very long letter from the Gorgons—they quite rave about you; but I have written to dear Lady Gorgon that sort of letter in reply which she will perfectly understand as a hope-killer for any of her girls. The Duchess too tells me that you have promised to go to them very soon, and you——”

“The Duchess may ——”—what, it is impossible to surmise—but so exclaimed George when he came to her Grace's name—throwing

down his mother's letter and hiding his eyes with his hands—"Emma—gone—lost to *me*—and herself—it cannot be—why that croaking Doctor must deal with some familiar, to have threatened me so earnestly with losing her—Emma—the pure—the good—the beautiful—accompany a wife flying from the arms and home of her husband?—It cannot be—I say again, and again, it cannot be. I'll never go near Binford—I'll never see that hated place again—What could I say to Harbottle?—what to Lovell?—I dare not ask them any thing concerning what has happened—and you too, my poor kind friend, Harvey—you to whom I addressed the expression of all my feelings only yesterday—anticipating that you would bound to meet me at Ullsford to talk over our sorrows and hopes together—gone—dead!—is it all a dream?—Harvey dead—the honest hand that pressed mine a few short days ago—cold—stiff—senseless—surely this must be some trick to cozen me—some frightful story wrought up by my mother in a fit of phrenzy, to drive me for ever from the place so intimately associated with all the people she has named—now dead—or perhaps worse."

Lord Weybridge's first impression was to seek his old friend, the Doctor ; but he felt himself at the moment unequal to his society, not only because the numerous incidents which had occurred would naturally give rise to innumerable interrogations, which he was quite sure he should have neither patience nor temper to answer, but because he felt convinced that the Doctor would consider himself amazingly strengthened by the recent extraordinary occurrences, in his *dictum* about not marrying the Parson's daughter, and would consequently deal out his decisions upon that point so triumphantly as to drive him half mad.

To what line of conduct Lord Weybridge might have eventually committed himself, it is impossible to say, for distracted as he was with his view of Emma's extraordinary conduct, in countenancing and supporting Mrs. Harbottle, and grieved to the heart as he was by the dreadful accident which had occurred to his amiable friend, he was compelled, by circumstances over which he had no controul, to attend—as much as in him lay—to law business of a nature so dry and dull, that even the gratifying fact of his own exaltation and aggrandizement could

scarcely repay him for his application to the subject—It, nevertheless, forced him to make that application, and consequently draw, or rather drive his attention from the circumstances much more interesting to his heart and mind, if not so vitally important to his property and pretensions.

That he would have hastened his departure for Binford, or make up his mind never to see it again, appeared equally probable when he had read the dreadful accounts contained in his lady mother's letter. But whatever might have been his resolution, it was stayed and checked by another event, equally unexpected with either of the others which have just been detailed ; which was neither more nor less than the arrival, about the middle of the next day, at the door of his lordship's hotel, of Lady Frances Sheringham herself and her maid, in a "yellow and two," with her tall footman, Robert, bumping his plush upon the bar of the "chay," outside.

Her ladyship had, previously to that morning, felt various suspicions about the interest which her son took in Binford, its politics and its inhabitants, but whether the real object of attraction were the Squire's lady, or the Par-

son's daughter, she had not, even up to that period, satisfactorily to herself ascertained. She had now convinced herself. If the reader recollects the preceeding narrative, he will see how the discovery arose:—Her ladyship had received by that morning's post, a letter from her son, directed to the Lady Frances Sheringham, Dale Cottage, Binford, which she had no sooner opened than she found was not intended for her, but on the contrary for his friend Charles Harvey, at that time no more.—George had, it will be remembered, written a letter to his mother, and another to his ill-fated friend, and sealed, addressed, and despatched them both at the same time. In the confusion of the moment, he had mis-directed, and consequently mis-despatched his epistles—the result of which confusion, not so uncommon in society as steady-going methodical people may suppose, was the perusal by Lady Frances of the following confidential and explanatory epistle:—

Tuesday Evening.

“DEAR HARVEY,—

“I verily believe that nothing upon earth is so delightful as meeting with a little sympathy.

I do assure you our dinner and evening at Ullsford were to me most agreeable, so agreeable, indeed, that I am going to propose our meeting there again on Friday. On that day I shall be *en route* to Binford, whence I shall take my mother to Severnstoke, which she has never seen, and which now is mine. I shall, therefore, if it suit your engagements, call a halt at Ullsford and repeat our last fishing and fowling repast on Thursday. The Mordaunts can surely spare you for one dinner, and as your heart is not yet, I presume, quite at your own disposal, the threadpaper misses of the house cannot have sufficient attraction to keep you tethered to their apron-strings—they are indeed *mordantes*, but I think you are not likely to be a sufferer—so let me hear that you will meet me.

“ I hate any thing that sounds romantic, and am almost as great an enemy to what ladies of a certain age call sentiment, as the veriest dandy in London. But, my dear Charles, I honestly confess to you, that Emma and her beauties—not only personal and mental, but of disposition and heart—are not to be got rid of—she is so natural, so mild, so amiable, so gentle,

and so good, and rely upon it, my dear friend, however lax a man of the world may be in his morality, and however loosely he may appear to hold the ‘bonds of reason,’ as some poet says, there is no being—at least I hope, and even believe—so callous or depraved, as that the sight of virtue and innocence like hers, brought into play, in their natural sphere of action, without forcing, without pretension, without affectation—must produce a powerful effect upon him. The sinner’s tear is a pearl of precious value; and I am not ashamed to admit to you—although I would not venture to do it at my Lady Tom-Tit’s *soirée*—that I have felt one ready to start, when I have contemplated the excellence of that exemplary girl, and thought to myself how blest, how infinitely blest he would be, who could attach to himself, and to his heart and soul, such tenderness, such kindness, such affection, and such piety.

“It is a dangerous theme. If I were to write all I think and feel about this dear good girl, I verily believe I should outwrite my most voluminous mother. My doom is sealed:—either

Emma Lovell is Lady Weybridge, or Lady Weybridge never exists in my lifetime.

“ My good and fond parent, who is, I assure you, a most admirable woman—spoiled, perhaps, a little by flattery at her first outset in the world—will scarcely bear to hear this determination :—and yet how odd. She married my father against the wishes of all her relations, who, as I have heard, were most anxious that she should set her cap at a duke of sixty-four ; and yet she took her own way, and, as far as worldly affairs go, her decision has turned out well—for here I am, what I am. But I am sure I should never get her to listen to my proposition about dear Emma. That *she* has *gentle* blood in her veins, who that has seen her can doubt ? That she has more than gentle blood in them, I am prepared to contend with my sensitive mother. Her mother was literally of noble blood ; and although you know enough of me, to know that I care nothing for the small differences of name in the same essential fluid, it may perhaps make a great difference in my discussions with Lady Frances, who is a stickler for such things, and who, the other day, seri-

ously justified some man who paid seven hundred pounds to the heralds, for making out a pedigree, in which the principal charge was for kings, at five shillings a-piece:—a proper price for crowned heads, I know you *would* say, if you were in spirits. It was an Irish gentleman of whom she was speaking, as you may naturally suppose; for kings were never quite so plentiful in England: and I suspect, if the Reform Bill passes, the scarcity, for the future, will be even still more striking.

“ I must not go on filling up this sheet with my rhapsodies. When we meet, my dear fellow, we may talk of her—of *her*—aye, and if you promise me, as your senior—we sailors look sharply to seniority—to behave well, give your own passions the curb, and allow mine the snaffle—we will talk of another *she*—and a lovely one too. But remember, Charles,—yet why should I lecture—you have taken your step—Love is not to be trifled with if you keep the field—retreat in good time, as you have most judiciously done, and you will not, perhaps, be pursued.

“ Oh, Harvey! this horrid London—bad in its best season—but now beyond endurance. I

cannot tell you how I look forward to Thursday—fresh air and fresh manners—and that unsophistication which is so much ridiculed here—but which holds out an assurance of perfect happiness—are to me essential—indispensable. I must have them, Harvey—and so, my dear fellow, write to me—write—but meet me you must at Ullsford, on Thursday *Entrenous*—the blue eyes shall not be mentioned. You know what I mean. All I say is, meet me. On the very brink of happiness myself, trust to me for being a most worthy sympathizer in the sorrows of others. Now do not fail me, my dear Harvey, and believe me truly yours,

“GEORGE — Psha!—what am I writing!
WEYBRIDGE.”

“So, so!” said Lady Frances, as she laid down this mis-directed letter, “and have I, by an extraordinary accident, after all discovered the real inclinations of my son! Now it comes clear as daylight to my mind’s eye. Now I can understand his coldness to all his relations at the present auspicious moment—his avoidance of all my friends, and his anxiety to return

here. And he thinks his mother was spoiled by flattery, does he?—and he believes that Miss Lovell has noble blood in her veins!—indeed!—fifteenth cousin of the great aunt of an Irish baron, perhaps.—Miss Lovell to be Lady Weybridge!—to be *my* daughter-in-law!—No, no, son George, that may never be——”

And thus she went on soliloquizing, until she had worked herself into the determination of the absolute necessity for immediate action. Something must be done on the instant. George must not return to Binford. He must not have the opportunity of hearing Emma's vindication from the lips of her venerable father, nor the justification of his permission for her to accompany Fanny. If, as she had really been told, Emma had generously and considerately volunteered, under her father's sanction, to make the journey to the residence of Mrs. Harbottle's aunt, her merit and kindness would be instantly made manifest, while the termination of their otherwise mysterious expedition at the house of the nearest female relation she had, would rescue Mrs. Harbottle from any imputation of blame. All these facts must unquestionably come to the knowledge of George,

if he were suffered to make his promised visit to the Cottage, and therefore the blow must be struck instantly. Lord Weybridge must be stopped in London, and their journey to Worcestershire made without reference to Binford, and without any deviation from the straight road, in order to visit it.

On her way to London, Lady Frances took into her consideration the course she should pursue with regard to the letter, which had thus accidentally and unexpectedly come to her hands; and after a lengthened debate with herself, she resolved altogether to conceal the receipt of it from her son, judging, that in the confusion which the death of his friend must have occasioned in the Mordaunt family, that either the letter which had of course been mis-directed to him by Lord Weybridge, would be entirely lost, or, if preserved, necessarily opened by some of his connexions, who, when it was found to have been so mis-directed, would in all human probability forward it to her ladyship her ladyship, in her anxiety to appear to George perfectly disinterested, in her assaults upon the propriety and respectability of Miss Lovell, losing sight of the much more

probable, as being the more obvious course to be pursued—that of returning the letter, unopened, to the peer from whom it came. Strange, however, as it may seem, her ladyship's silence was effectual ; for whether the letter were opened by servants or accidentally mislaid, certain it is, it never turned up, and Lord Weybridge never was in the slightest degree enlightened as to the source of his mother's authentic information with regard to his real views and intentions.

Lady Frances, however, had a curious mind. If she had an object to attain, she would always go about it as engineers approach a fortified place, by a zig-zag, or like a waterman, who looks one way while he pulls another. A story Squire Harbottle used to tell in his happy days might serve as an illustration of her ladyship's character. He had ordered one of his labourers to cut a path across a field for the accommodation of his neighbours by shortening a distance between two given points. The man obeyed his orders ; and when the Squire came to look at the path, he found it, instead of being straight, and in a direct line from boundary to boundary, sinuous, and snake-like, upon

which he abused the labourer, for his stupidity. The labourer looked sceptically at his master, and said, " Lord love your heart, sir—a path's never straight—it's out o' the nature of a path to be straight." So was it out of the nature of Lady Frances Sheringham's mind to be straight,—and she felt herself in the present instance fully justified in exerting all her tact and trickery in carrying the present principal object of her life—that of overthrowing and utterly destroying the much-dreaded connexion between her son and the Parson's daughter.

" My mother !" exclaimed Lord Weybridge, as his servant announced Lady Frances.

" Yes, dearest George !" exclaimed her ladyship, running into his arms ; " I could not endure the thought of the distress you must be suffering on account of your poor friend's death, in the midst of the worries of business and the dullness of London ; and I resolved to volunteer my society. If you had come to me at Binford, on your way to Worcestershire, it would have made nearly forty miles difference in the journey ; now that I am here, all that will be saved, and we can go to Worcestershire direct. Tell me, my dear child, how are you ?"

“In health well enough,” said George; “but in mind diseased. The events with which your letter have made me acquainted, only prove that rank and fortune cannot alone secure happiness. So severe a blow has never fallen upon me, as that which your intelligence inflicted.”

“The news of the death of one to whom we are attached,” said Lady Frances, “coming so suddenly, has all the terror of a frightful dream; it seems impossible, and we vainly hope to awake from the terrible illusion. Is it not curious, that such an event should have occurred so near to the period of Mrs. Harbottle’s elopement.”

“Curious indeed,” said George, “but strangest of all is it, that she should have persuaded Emma Lovell to accompany her; or, that her father should have sanctioned such a step, which he must have done. However, a few days will clear up that part of the story, for if we do not pass through Binford, going to Worcestershire, I shall, at all events, see the poor old gentleman when I leave you there, on our return.

“I don’t think I shall go back to Binford,” said Lady Frances, “till after Christmas. My

present intention is, to go on from you, to the north, and so remain till I return from Grimsbury. Binford is so cut up and altered by the events which have so unexpectedly occurred, and, as circumstances now stand, one must take a decided line in the politics of the place—that I shall retire from it, until it has again settled down into its wonted tranquillity. I have made my arrangements; the furniture is all to be taken down, and the cottage, as you would say, to be ‘laid up in ordinary’ till January, or, perhaps, February.”

“If I ever see Binford again,” said George, “I shall see it before January.”

“I was sure your feelings would be sadly excited about the dreadful accident to Mr. Harvey,” said Lady Frances.

“And, tell me,” said his lordship, “did any thing appear in the evidence before the coroner to account for the destruction of my poor friend?”

“Nothing,” said Lady Frances; “nothing beyond the fact which I wrote to you; the people have made a strong representation of the dangerous state and position of the gravel-pit; but the precaution comes rather late. I

never saw a more powerful feeling than the event has created in the neighbourhood."

"Poor fellow!" said George.

And thus did Lord Weybridge continue inquiring, and Lady Frances replying, until at length it occurred to them both, that her ladyship might perhaps require some refreshment after her hurried journey, and they parted only to meet again at dinner.

Lady Frances could not help congratulating herself on the execution of her plan, and rejoicing greatly in the readiness with which George had altered the arrangement of taking Binford *en route* to his country house; but she still saw the difficulty she had to encounter in preventing a correspondence between him and the Rector, which she considered, as things stood, almost certain to be entered upon. George, however, could not write to him that day, and before the close of the next, she hoped she might contrive to hit upon some expedient which should frustrate the intention altogether.

The party at dinner was originally to have consisted of Lord Weybridge, his privy-counsellor MacGopus, and the tutor of his late cousin, Mr. Crabshaw, whom he had appointed one of his

chaplains. This little junto was agreeably increased by the unexpected arrival of Lady Frances, who had never yet seen either of those gentlemen, for George before his elevation had never any home, except his mother's house, or hotel, and, therefore, had no opportunity of entertaining his own personal friends at, what would else no doubt have been, his hospitable board.

In anticipation of the arrival of the guests, and in an interesting conversation about themselves, we shall for the present leave the lord and the lady, and take a view of events as they appear to be in progress in the country.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Your thoughts are still as much your own
As when you kept the key of your own breast.”
DRYDEN.

It has long been a question—and by many very zealous persons—a question of vast importance, whether the Eleusinian and Dionysian mysteries, the fraternity of Ionian architects, and the Essenian and Pythagorean associations were the same as those of freemasonry at the present moment, varied only as the religious opinions and rites of the different fraternities themselves differ. Huge volumes have been written, and great names made in the discussion of these topics, which, to the “prophane”^s and

uninitiated may appear not of such transcendent consequence; but we must leave them all, wherever they may be found, to the contemplation of our reader, and content ourselves with merely telling him that no lodge in the world was ever more closely tiled than Lovell's library during Harbottle's visit; nor any secret more unattainable than the history of what passed within its walls between the Squire and the Rector, pending their interview.

He entered the Parsonage red and raving with rage—he left it pale and subdued—he spoke as he entered, in a tone of authority and passion—he quitted it pale and trembling, with lowliness and submission, and betook himself to the Hall, where he remained for a short time only, and then departed in his travelling carriage, as most people supposed, in pursuit of his lady.

This, however, was not the case. She was not destined to be so followed, and on the second day from their departure, she and her friend reached the residence of her much-talked-of aunt, the elder sister of her late father—a venerable lady—rigid in her morality—wholly unused to the world as it goes—a stranger to

London for forty years, and one of the most peculiar characters imaginable ; she was full of the anecdotes of her day, and of the period when she had known a great deal of everybody and everything, and when her father, the grandfather of Mrs. Harbottle, was a man of wealth and importance.

Fanny, who to Emma's great disappointment, and even vexation, had never gone one step farther in the disclosure of her reasons for so abruptly quitting home, evidently began to feel nervous and agitated as she approached the house of the veteran Diana to whose care she was about to commit herself, and whose protection was so requisite and important to her character in her present difficult and delicate position. It was in vain Emma periodically renewed her inquiries on the subject—she was met by her friend with one of those “pray don't ask me's,” which are invincible, and the claims of friendship which Emma, upon a principle of duty to her father, could not hesitate to admit.

Is it, however, to be supposed, that when the day approached on which George was to re-visit Binford, and when, even by Fanny's own statements, and the repetition of the conversation

she had with him, it was evident he intended to make a formal proposal for Emma's hand, she, with all her friendship, all her fortitude, all her philosophy, could keep her thoughts from wandering homeward? a tendency, to which it must be admitted, they the more inclined, from the unusual, and to her unaccountable, reserve of Mrs. Harbottle.

She had sacrificed everything for her—even from the very first proposition she had made, to the last—and yet she was not deemed worthy of her friend's confidence. "Incompatibility of temper," was to be the plea to her aunt, for her separation, backed and corroborated by a letter from Lovell—but whatever old Miss Jarman might think of the matter, Emma knew—for *she* had been told so much—that "incompatibility of temper" was to be *called* the cause of their disunion, but that, in fact, it was not the *real* source of the evil—surely, placed as she was, she ought to know the whole truth; but no—her father had intreated her not to press Mrs. Harbottle on the subject, to which she had agreed, convinced that she would, of herself, communicate all the circumstances connected with it—on the contrary, she

found that she would communicate none ; and as Emma's suspicions, during the progress of their journey, turned more decidedly than ever, towards something connected with Charles Harvey, and she ventured even to hint as much, Fanny's agitation and suffering were visibly encreased, and as she had before done, she earnestly intreated her never to let her hear his name mentioned.

But there was another thing which mortified poor Miss Lovell almost as much, if not quite, as the silence of her friend upon her own particular affairs, which was, that she never, or if ever, only cursorily alluded to *hers*. Once or twice she expressed a regret—rather civil and formal—though apparently sincere—that her misfortunes had been the cause of taking Emma away from Binford at the very point of time at which Lord Weybridge was expected—but she did not dwell upon the circumstance—she did not talk about him—or his merits—or his attentions—or his affection ; on the contrary she maintained a sort of sullen silence, which, particularly as far as his lordship was concerned was extremely unpleasant to Emma, and moreover had a tendency to connect, in some way or

other, how, she did not, it is true, distinctly make out, her removal from Binford with his lordship's arrival there.

About the dusk of the second day's journey—not expeditiously performed, for a carriage with a pair of horses on the outside and a couple of ladies within, is seldom put into any very rapid motion—they reached the top of the hill which commands a view of the town, in the neighbourhood of which Miss Jarman's residence was situated. The fading redness of the setting sun displayed to their eyes the castle, and church-tower, and the most prominent buildings of the town, blended in one deep blue mass, fantastically shaped, and animated by the lighter blue and curling smoke from the chimneys.

The post-boy, taking advantage of the moment to rest his tired steeds, touching his hat, turned on his horse to inquire whether he was to go across the mead, or along the high road to Miss Jarman's. As not one individual of the party had ever seen the town, the road, the mead, or Miss Jarman, the question was hard to answer; but the reply, “whichever is the shortest way,” was safe and considerate; except

indeed, that as much time was consumed in traversing the worse road, as would have been expended in covering the longer distance on the better.

In going for the first time to a place—more especially if any circumstances of interest are likely to result from the visit—one feels, however glad for many reasons to have finished the journey, a sort of regret that the moment of arrival is at hand. It is true, that by the preconcerted division of their progress into two days, Mr. Lovell's letter to Miss Jarman, which was to pave the way for Mrs. Harbottle, and prepare her aunt for her reception, accompanied by one from herself, would have been in her hands several hours before they reached her residence—still there was something awkward, and almost awful in their meeting; for Miss Jarman, whose retirement from the world was a matter of choice, had never accepted any of the invitations of the Squire, of whom, however, it was in some degree fortunate she had, from all she had heard of him, formed a very unfavourable opinion. There was one peculiarity for which she was rather remarkable;—with every disposition for conversation, and a

good deal of general information and anecdote, she had not the faculty of recollecting anything in the world which she wished to remember; her mind was as quick and vigorous as ever, and this want of recollection did not in the slightest degree affect her as to persons, or objects, or places present; nor did it curb her fancy or deaden her imagination, but it gave to her conversation a strangeness of character, which to any one—to every one who had not the pleasure of her acquaintance, must unquestionably have the air of caricature. Of this peculiarity, unluckily for her approaching visitors, they were not, in the slightest degree, aware; and certainly if they had not both been absorbed in grief and anxiety, the display of it would have caused, with *their* perception of the ridiculous, a scene, the very reverse of what might be considered genteel in the west of England.

As they crossed the mead—which they did with nearly as much motion as a frigate would feel in a gale of wind off the Cape of Good Hope, the chariot pitching and rolling terribly—the hollow barkings of two or three dogs proclaimed to their ears the position of the house, the exterior of

which their eyes were not destined distinctly to see; suddenly their progress was checked by a low green gate; this opened, they moved with somewhat more of ease along a narrow road until a second gate arrested their career. Having passed this barrier, the postboy appeared to gain considerable confidence, and putting on his horses, gave a sudden turn into a third gate, and they found themselves wheeled half round a gravel circle encompassing a bosquet of laurel, laurestinus and holly.

The door was opened, and a servant was ready to receive them. The dogs having duly announced their approach—the ladies alighted. Fanny trembling excessively and Emma quite as nervous as it was necessary to be in a state of uncertainty as to their reception—the lamp which swung in the centre of the square hall, (around which was a gallery protected by oaken balusters, in which two servant-maids, one holding a candle in her hand, were peeping over to look at the new arrivals) burned dimly; and as the man preceded them across the marble floor along a path of mat to the door of the drawing-room, Fanny gave Emma a look terribly expressive of her feel-

ings, and which Emma could not help thinking had something regretful in its character, elicited, perhaps, by the striking contrast which the chilly twilight of their new abode afforded to the brightly illuminated, well-warmed corridors and vestibules of Binford.

“What name shall I say, ma’am?” said the servant.

Fanny was ashamed of mentioning hers, and Emma afraid to pronounce her own. Harbottle, to be sure, was not a soft sounding patronymic; however Emma undertook to be spokeswoman, and informed the servant. The door was thrown open, and presented to view a remarkably comfortable square room—low, but snug; the doors trimmed with gilt leather, and the windows covered by rich damask curtains—a thick Turkey carpet concealed the floor, excepting round the skirting-boards, where the well-polished oak proclaimed the antiquity of the mansion and the industry of the housemaids; a large wood fire, the first they had seen that year, crackled in the grate, and two small dogs, one a poodle, and the other a pug, both very fat, and both wearing ribands and collars, as if it were a gala-day, were dozing

on the rug, from which they simultaneously rose to bark at the ladies as they entered.

Some few pictures adorned the walls; two cages of canary-birds hung near their mistress, and a huge grey cat, with immense whiskers, who had for many years been on terms of the most perfect amity with the dogs, sat close to the old lady's chair, purring and winking in the best possible temper.

"How do you do my dear niece," said Miss Jarman, laying down her spectacles and extending both her hands towards Fanny, "I am vastly glad to see you. You must excuse my getting up; I am almost a cripple. Miss—Miss—What is the young lady's name, Budd?"

"Lovell, ma'am," said the toady.

"Ah! Miss Lovell, I am happy to see you," continued Miss Jarman; "what sort of a—journey have you had—I have got your father's letter—we shall discuss that by-and-bye—wont you—Miss Budd—ring the—pull the—"

Miss Budd understood, and rang the bell.

"And have the goodness to show the—ladies—their,—what rooms—?"

"Sleeping rooms?"

“ Exactly. Take off your things—and we will order—what d’ye call—the—thing—the tea and coffee—to be ready when you come down—”

In ordinary conversation Miss Jarman, who, as the reader already knows, was somewhat advanced in years, got on at the rate we have just ventured to exhibit. It was when she attempted narrative and tried her hand at the descriptive, that her peculiarities more splendidly displayed themselves.

She was a fine looking person, and Fanny was much struck by a strong resemblance between the expression of her countenance and that of her late father. Her reception of them was kind and affectionate, and at once set Fanny’s heart at rest, as to the effect produced by Lovell’s letter and her own, still she looked forward with a most disagreeable sensation to the conversation which must inevitably take place after tea.

Miss Budd, who had resided for many years with Miss Jarman in the capacity of companion, and had now become absolutely necessary to her as interpreter, or rather “ flapper,” was a tall gaunt person, with a long face, and a coun-

tenance of immoveable inexpressiveness ; and, in her opinion, but which she did not, of course, venture to express, the conduct of the new visitor in quitting the protection of her husband, was only equalled in baseness on the part of Miss Jarman, by her ready reception of the guilty fugitive under her roof. To be sure, circumstances might be explained ; and a clergyman would scarcely pledge his character and reputation, or suffer his daughter to be the associate of a female, who had conducted herself improperly ; but, however, she would wait and see, and in either case say nothing.

During, and after tea, the depression of Fanny's spirits became so evident, and her efforts to rally so unavailing, that by the unanimous decision of the other three ladies, she was persuaded to retire—if not to sleep, at least to rest. The whirl and rattle of the journey, and the varying objects which had met her eye—even abstracted as she had been—kept her mind, during their progress, in a small degree diverted from the undivided consideration of her own position ; but when she found herself seated in a strange house, with persons unknown to her, in a silence un-

broken, except by the heavy ticking of a tall japanned-case clock in one of the corners of the room, and contemplated the sudden change which the events of eight and forty hours had wrought in her condition, and recollected that she had chosen her course—that it was now irrevocable, and that the intelligence of the morning from Lovell would of course be seriously important, as regarded her future character and conduct in the world, she could no longer bear up ; and accordingly she was led by Emma and Miss Budd to her bed-room, where, in opposition to their wishes, more especially those of Miss Lovell, she entreated to be left to herself. Her companions returned to the drawing-room, much to the delight of the rigid frigid Diana, Miss Budd, who hoped that Miss Jarman would take the opportunity of Fanny's absence to extract as much information as possible out of her companion, upon which they might form a better judgment than they yet had been able to arrive at, as to the circumstances of the case.

Miss Jarman, however, who besides being better bred than Miss Budd, was, for family reasons, and moreover because she had con-

sented to receive and shelter her niece, not at all inclined to throw more light upon the affair than was just necessary, lest a too powerful illumination might betray more than would be agreeable, resolved rather upon leaving the main question untouched, and of making herself acquainted with the disposition and conversational talents of Miss Lovell.

“Have you been much in London, Miss Lovell?” said the old lady.

“Not much,” said Emma. “We were always in town for two or three months every year till my dear mother’s death, but, since that event, we have been only twice away from Binford.”

“I was very fond of London once,” said Miss Jarman, “but it is so altered, I dare say I should scarcely know it. I am told they have taken up all—what d’ye call it, Miss Budd?”

“The pavement, ma’am.”

“Yes—pavement; and that Mr.—what’s the name of the man who came from the place where that Doctor who wrote the—what d’ye call the book with the words?”

“Dictionary, ma’am,” said Miss Budd.

“Dictionary—yes,” continued Miss Jarman;

“ where he said the people eat—what’s the name of the thing they make water gruel of?”

“ Oatmeal, ma’am,” said Miss Budd.

“ Ah, oats. He said they eat oats; I recollect now. Well, that Mr. somebody has taken up all the, what did I say, Budd?”

“ Pavement, ma’am,” said Budd.

“ Aye—pavement; and put down pebbles instead.”

“ Oh, MacAdam;” said Emma.

“ Yes—MacAdam;” said Miss Jarman.—
“ Recollect, Miss Budd, always remind me of MacAdam—and that must very much have altered the place; and they have pulled down—I forget the name of the place—where the Prince of—pscha, the King’s eldest son lived, opposite the man with the red—what d’ye call the thing in his button-hole?—him who used to scrape my—my—”

“ Teeth, ma’am,” said Budd.

This, which no doubt appears caricature in writing, was what Emma had to endure *vivâ vocé*; and the ease and volubility with which it all glided over the lips of Miss Jarman, who being extended at her ease on a huge arm chair, moved neither hand nor foot during her

oration, but only turned her head on her neck, pivot-wise towards Miss Budd, whenever she wanted a refreshener was most marvellous.

“ Every thing changes,” continued the lady. “ I recollect when nothing was too gay for me. I never missed a night of the—that place where I used to go twice a week, see what I did not like, and hear what I could’nt understand, and paid three hundred a year for a—what d’ye call the thing ?”

“ An opera-box, ma’am,” said Miss Budd.

“ You are not old enough, Miss—”

“ Lovell.”

“ —Miss Lovell, to remember another place that I, as a girl, delighted in, where we used to walk round and round a great room, like so many horses in a mill, to the sound of horns and clarionets, in an atmosphere of tea-kettle smoke, smelling coffee and muffins—I *do* recollect the name of *that*, Miss Budd—Ranelagh.”

“ I have had a great loss in being born so late ;” said Emma.

“ Why so ?” said Miss Jarman. “ As I was saying to Miss Budd, the other day, the discoveries of the last twenty years have been such as to set us wondering, and, as far as *I* am

concerned, make one sorry to have been born so soon."

It would be scarcely worth setting down the conversation which was maintained between the two ladies, with the interpolations of the refresher, nor should the reader have been troubled with the small specimen here offered, but to enlighten him as to the sort of society into which poor Mrs. Harbottle had voluntarily plunged herself. Having taken the step, a removal from the protection of her aunt would be destruction ; and after a tedious sitting of three hours of forgetfulness and recollections, Emma, not yet knowing the nature or extent of Fanny's provocations to flight, could not help thinking that, if they arose from " incompatibility of temper," as she had been told, she would find the remedy worse than the disease ; or, at all events, much upon a par as an experiment with putting on a perpetual blister to cure a temporary disorder.

She visited Fanny before she went to her own room—she found her awake—bathed in tears, and pale as death. It was her own desire that she should not be visited by any of the family until Emma retired to rest—a smile of friend-

ship and affection beamed through the sorrowful expression of her lovely countenance as she extended her hand to her kind companion, and to the inquiry how she felt, her reply that she should be better to-morrow, struck Emma as having something extremely peculiar in its manner and emphasis: there was a wildness and an earnestness, even a solemnity in it, uncommon, unusual in the tone of Fanny's voice, and in her way of speaking; it seemed to imply much more than Miss Lovell could comprehend—the words, too, were followed by another gush of tears.

Emma knew that her father was to write after having seen the Squire, she had heard him promise that, and he had promised, also, that she should have a letter from him; but, no letter, let its contents be what they might could have the effect of altering Fanny's position; because, although she had sedulously concealed the immediate circumstances which had produced the separation, she had more than once during the journey declared, that no earthly power could induce her ever again to see her husband.

At one moment a horrible idea entered

Emma's mind—she thought she knew the principles and character of her friend too well to to entertain it—yet—for the instant it flashed across her imagination. She thought, that Fanny meditated some rash act by which she should terminate an existence, now as she had repeatedly declared grown irksome to her ; but, no !—a moment's reflection assured her of the impossibility of such conduct on her part, and although she entreated her to let her sleep on a sofa which was in the room, and remain near her during the night, she felt no apprehension when Fanny insisted upon her going to her own bed, to take the rest of which, after their journey, she must stand so much in need, that she left her in any danger from her own hand.

She inquired of Emma, if her conduct had been the subject of their evening's conversation, and felt well pleased with her aunt's delicacy and consideration when she found it had not been so much as touched upon. The old lady had received both her and Miss Lovell merely as visitors whom she expected, and, conscious how painful any recurrence to the topics, nearest her heart as well as theirs, must be, reserved for a private interview with her niece

at some more seasonable opportunity, those inquiries which she might think proper to make, proving by her warmth and kindness that she was perfectly satisfied with the general impression she had taken of the delicate affair.

Emma in saying what had not been the subject of their conversation, did not tell Fanny the nature of the conversation which really did take place, nor point her attention to the extraordinary failing of her venerable relation, convinced that Fanny would in an instant detect the old lady's habitual forgetfulness, which in brighter days no doubt would have had its full effect upon her then joyous disposition; but Emma could not help thinking to herself, that however warm the reception she had met with, and however kind the old lady's manner towards her might be, she was not sorry that her stay was not to be prolonged beyond a week or ten days at the farthest, although she deeply regretted the absolute necessity of leaving her sorrowing friend behind her.

While this most respectable and amiable family are asleep, or at least when

—————“ All did sleep,
Whose weary hearts could borrow
One hour from care and love to rest”

it may not be improper to introduce the reader to another member of it, who did not make his appearance during the evening of the arrival of the ladies, but who had been staying for some weeks at Miss Jarman's.

This other member formed, perhaps, an addition to the old lady's family circle, not exactly anticipated by either of the travellers. And it might appear strange even to the reader, that the name of the individual had not even been mentioned during the long conversation between the ladies in the drawing-room.

The individual in question was a young French Count, Alexis de Montenay by name, who had been staying as it afterwards turned out with Miss Jarman for several weeks. He was the son of an old friend of hers, and having been in some degree Anglicized by education, had become a regular visiter at her house once or twice in every year. The distance at which Miss Jarman lived from Fanny, and the very casual intercourse which existed between them, confined entirely to correspondence, and even in that respect, restricted to a seasonable letter of good wishes at Christmas, will account for her not having been prepared to find such

a visiter there. Indeed, if she had been aware of the circumstance, knowing as she did, the ill-nature of the world, and the vindictive spirit of her husband, it might have altered her intention of throwing herself under the care of her aunt, whose house she considered to be, as indeed it looked very like, a sort of Protestant nunnery, in which, all the rigid observances of such establishments were maintained, without any of the mummery and hypocrisy so generally to be found in them. But to find the dull circle of Mopeham House enlivened by the wit and vivacity of a French count, an Alexis de Montenay, was what neither of the lady travellers expected.

So however it was, and when Emma was being dressed, the announcement of the fact was made to her by her maid, who not only told her that there was a French Count in the family, but that she had seen him—that he had spoken to her—and thence she proceeded to eulogize his beauty and affability, in terms which made Miss Lovell wonder. She felt no gentle alarms, no tender fears for the safety of her own heart, but she certainly *did* think, as far as the sound of the thing went, it was not the most for-

tunate circumstance in the world as related to her friend, placed, as she was, in so very delicate a situation.

Fanny was made acquainted with the intelligence as soon as Emma visited her, but she was not in a state to take an interest in any thing that might happen. The dread—the anxiety—the wildness, at which Emma had trembled the night before, still oppressed and agitated her, and it was with the greatest difficulty she could speak even to her constant and faithful companion. Her earliest inquiry was “at what hour the post arrived?” On the receipt of letters all her anxiety appeared to be fixed, and when at last they actually arrived, it was in a fit of something like frenzy that she rallied all her energies, and starting up in her bed, broke the seal of that which she recognized as coming from Lovell.

CHAPTER IX.

“ I would by contraries execute all things.”

SHAKSPEARE.

IT will be recollected by the reader, perhaps, that we left Lord Weybridge at his hotel in London, waiting, with his lady mother, the arrival of Dr. MacGopus and the chaplain to dinner. It is necessary to the conduct of our history to revert to those important personages, and leave our poor suffering friend Mrs. Harbottle to the uninterrupted perusal of her much wished for despatch. It is also necessary to add that their expectations with respect to their visitors were only half realized—the Doctor came, but the chaplain sent an apology for his absence.

It turned out that Lady Frances was extremely pleased with MacGopus—for, although the Doctor had something *brusque* and abrupt in his manner towards men, he was, by comparison, as soft as oil and sweet as honey to the ladies. His entire want of sentimentality rather operated against him in her ladyship's opinion, and at any other time might perhaps have proved fatal to his progress in her good opinion ; but at the present moment, as he took the turn of rallying George upon his romantic attachment to the Parson's daughter, it was extremely gratifying to her, most particularly now, that she had herself ascertained, under his own hand, that her son was so entirely devoted to her.

“ I told him,” said the Doctor, “ before your ladyship came to town, what a silly thing it would be to go and commit himself to a young woman like that. I admit Emma is a very pretty name, and is associated in my mind with as charming a creature as ever lived—and his lordship is pleased sometimes to joke me thereupon—but I am one person, and he is another, and he himself is another person from what he was afortnight ago.”

“ Exactly,” said Lady Frances.

“ And as I tell him, my lady,” continued MacGopus, taking a huge pinch of snuff, “ the very change in his position ought, as well for her sake as his own, to make a change in the whole affair. The young body might do admirably well for the wife of a half-pay commander in the navy, who would be ill at ease as a peeress of the realm, and—”

“ No, but Doctor,” interrupted Lady Frances, “ George’s position in society is not so much altered by his unexpected accession to the title: he was always of the same blood, you know—noble on both sides—and *I* should have had just as much objection to the match while he was a commander in the navy, and *my* son, and Lord Pevensey’s nephew, and Lord Weybridge’s cousin, as I have now.”

“ Quere, my lady,” said MacGopus, “ how did your ladyship’s family come by the title of Pevensey?”

“ Oh, hang it,” interrupted George, “ what has that to do with the subject we are discussing. The point upon which you choose to give your advice, and upon which we entirely differ, is that of the eligibility of Miss Lovell to be

Lady Weybridge. My mother says she thinks I am not one bit exalted by my adventitious accession to the peerage, and therefore the thing is at an end. I quite agree with her, and as I had made up my mind to marry Miss Lovell when I was Captain Sheringham, I can carry that intention into practice as Lord Weybridge, without, as she admits, incurring either her displeasure or disapprobation."

"Stop now," said MacGopus, with an expression of something like anticipated satisfaction at what he was going to say, playing about his mouth; "when you was Captain Sheringham, Miss Lovell had not been the companion of a fugitive wife on a runaway expedition."

"Oh for shame, MacGopus," said Lord Weybridge, "how can you attach any importance to that event—do you imagine that a man like Mr. Lovell, a Clergyman of the Establishment, exemplary in every point of his character, would have permitted his child to be the partner of such an expedition, unless he had satisfied himself, beyond the chance of deception, of the purity and propriety of Mrs. Harbottle's character."

"I don't know," said MacGopus, "the clergy

of your church are no better than they should be."

"And who amongst us is?" said Lord Weybridge, "I am vexed to hear a man of sense and judgment like yourself, fall into a vulgar cry against our clergy. Take them collectively, or take them individually, and I will stake my existence, that with fewer exceptions than are to be found proportionably in any other profession, such a body of men of piety, learning, charity, and benevolence, is not to be found on the face of the globe, as the clergy of the Church of England."

"George," said the Doctor, chuckling with delight, "what d'ye think of Doctor Doddipole of the Grampus, who went to prayers with——"

"Think," interrupted Lord Weybridge—whose mother, by the way, invariably started back in her chair and stared whenever MacGopus called his Lordship's George—"I think he was a disgrace to his cloth; but you are not to judge the many by the scoundrel few—you are not to stigmatize four or five thousand gentlemen because of their profession there are four or five vagabonds; nothing in the whole world is more

detestable and degraded than a sensual dissipated parson."

"One thing if you please," said MacGopus, "a shabby sneaking, shuffling attorney—and exactly as much opposed to the high-minded gentlemanly well bred practitioner in that branch of the law as——"

"Your friend Dr. Doddipole is to my friend Mr. Lovell," said Lord Weybridge,——

"Stop now," said MacGopus, "who is Mr. Lovell?"

"Why, psha," said George, "who is Mr. Lovell?"

"Don't be angry, my dear George," said Lady Frances, who was not exactly aware of the terms upon which her son and his prime minister were in the habit of living, "the Doctor didn't remember at the moment."

"Not he—he argues only to provoke me, and if I were base, mean, and wicked enough to turn my back on this dear delightful girl, to whom I feel myself bound by honour and affection, he would be the first to reproach me with my heartlessness and infidelity."

"Not I," said MacGopus, again taking snuff,

“I have said you’ll never marry her—I don’t see why you should.”

“I quite agree with the Doctor,” said Lady Frances, “and I am very much indebted to him for having drawn you into so clear a declaration of your feelings and opinions with regard to the young lady.”

“I see no necessity for disguise,” said George, “and therefore cannot perceive the great advantage derivable from the Doctor’s perverseness and ill breeding.”

“My dear,” said Lady Frances.

“Oh my lady,” said the Doctor, as deliberately as if he had been fighting, or amputating, at both of which performances he was universally allowed to be a remarkably steady hand—“that’s only *his* way of talking—it is mighty easy to call *that* ill-breeding which does not exactly suit our fancy at the moment—I know professionally that no physic is pleasant, and no operation particularly agreeable. But the patient, when his cure is complete, is always grateful to the Doctor, although he wishes him at old Nick while he is actually suffering under his discipline.”

“All that,” said Lord Weybridge, “is

vastly fine and vastly clever I dare say, and may amuse my mother ; but I do not see what earthly right you can possibly have to interpose advice in a cause where you are retained by neither party."

" It puts your lordship into a passion," said MacGopus, " and that's something."

" It does put me into a passion, and I admit it," said Lord Weybridge ; " and when you are in one of these infernal humours, I most heartily and sincerely wish you at Jericho."

" Quere now," interrupted the Doctor—" about Jericho—do you think that the Zakoun of our time is the same thing as the old balm of Mecca."

" Stuff," said his lordship.

" No stuff at all," said the Doctor ; " I have been there and tasted the Myrabolam, the date, and the opobalsamum, and I wanted to know if you could give me any information."

" The deuce take it all," exclaimed his lordship, unable any longer to endure the torture of the Doctor's imperturbability, and starting out of his chair he bounced out of the room, banging the door after him with a report like that of a thirty-two pound cannonade.

“ There,” exclaimed Lady Frances, “ now he’s off.”

“ He’ll come back again, my lady,” said the Doctor, taking more snuff—“ your ladyship has known him longer than I have, but I have seen more of him than your ladyship has—he ought not to marry this young lady—he is not pledged to her—and——”

“ My dear Doctor,” said Lady Frances, “ I am sure you will forgive my earnestness, but seeing how completely we agree upon this point, let me intreat you, use the influence you possess over him and put an end to it—I have secured him from visiting Binford.”

“ Stay, my lady—where’s Binford,” said the Doctor.

“ Binford,” said her ladyship, not yet perfectly aware of the Doctor’s peculiarities and wondering at the question—“ Why, Doctor—Binford is the place where my cottage is, and where—

“ Oh, I see,” said the Doctor—“ go on, my lady.”

“ I say I have effectually prevented his return there—at all events, for the present.”

“ Stop, my lady,” said the Doctor—“ Why should you prevent his returning there?”

“ In order,” said Lady Frances, “ to put an end, if possible, to his connexion with the Parson’s daughter.”

“ Quere?” said MacGopus—“ Why should you wish to put an end to his connexion with the Parson’s daughter. Many peers have married Parson’s daughters—many peers are parsons themselves. If she is good and amiable, and accomplished, I don’t see—”

“ Why, mercy on me,” interrupted her ladyship—“ haven’t you yourself been arguing against the connexion—haven’t you yourself pointed out all the numerous objections?”

“ To be sure I have,” said the Doctor, with one of his subdued laughs, “ but that was only for argument sake—George is all for marrying her—I therefore differ from him—you are altogether against the match—upon totally different grounds—therefore I differ from your ladyship.”

“ How extremely provoking,” said Lady Frances ; “ then you were not in earnest when you supported me in my views while my son was present.”

“Never more in earnest in my life,” said MacGopus.

“I really do not comprehend your character, Doctor,” said Lady Frances, somewhat angry.

“You never will,” said MacGopus. “Your son is old enough—wise enough—and now, rich enough to make a choice; why should I interfere?—if I advised him not to marry, he would still marry if he chose; and I should have the satisfaction of making his wife my enemy for life, with the certainty that she would make him hate me too; and if he followed my suggestions, the same results would arise; with this only difference, that in addition to herself, all the young lady’s family would hate me into the bargain.”

“But he considers you his prime minister—his first councillor.”

“No, he does not,” said MacGopus; “if he respected my advice, or cared for my opinion, he would not bounce about and burst out of the room.”

“But you irritate him by your inveterate coolness, which is so strongly opposed to his own fervour and volatility.”

"That's the only chance I have of keeping him steady," replied the Doctor, "your ladyship will see in a quarter of an hour, when the effervescence has subsided, he will come back again, a most calm and reasonable creature."

"For my part," said Lady Frances, "I do not think calmness always a proof of rationality."

"I do," said MacGopus.

"Why now," continued her ladyship, "look at George—you talk of his effervescence subsiding—I know that with all that appearance of unsteadiness and thoughtlessness his attachments are firm and lasting."

"They are no such thing, my lady," replied the provoking stoic; "I have seen more of his attachments than you possibly can have seen—he's a weathercock—a dog-vane. The scud in the sky is not more easily affected by the wind, than he by variety. At Madras, he—"

"Yes, yes, my dear sir," said Lady Frances, "but those were youthful indiscretions, and mere heartless flirtations, and—"

"No such thing, my lady," said the Doctor; "each one of them was just as serious as the present affair; but change, change did it, and

may do it again. I don't advise, as I have already said ; but if you want this Parson's daughter to be driven out of his head, throw him into the society of something new—and pretty—and gay—and graceful—and you'll see the result."

"It is the very experiment I am about to try," said her ladyship ; "I mean to persuade him to collect a small agreeable party at his place in Worcestershire, and amongst them I shall secure one or two families of the very best sort, who have amongst them three or four of the most attractive girls of the year."

"Do no such thing," said MacGopus, "find out one family, with one daughter, and have them down, if you please. If she is amiable and handsome, she will appear ten thousand times more amiable, seen quietly in domestic life, without the excitement of rivalry, or the compulsion to shew off. Let her be fair, gentle, and unassuming in manner—accomplished, but not shewy—kind without pretension—and pious without ostentation ;—and, above all, let her be a good daughter :—for of such stock come good wives."

"Why, my dear sir !" exclaimed Lady

Frances, "you have exactly described the young person to whom he is at this moment attached. She is all you require for him."

"Why then, how can you be so silly as to oppose their marriage?" said MacGopus, chuckling in an under tone, at having hit her ladyship hard.

"Silly, sir!" said Lady Frances, who was more puzzled by her new acquaintance than by any body she had ever met with; "I am not conscious that it is silly to require something more for a person destined, as George is, to move in a higher sphere."

"He requires no such thing, my lady," said the Doctor. "If Providence has given the young woman virtue, beauty, and ability, and disposition to make a husband's happiness, you ought to be thankful to that same Providence for having given *your* son the power of securing that happiness, by placing her in a sphere which, by your own account, she seems destined to adorn."

"Well," said Lady Frances, getting almost angry, "I have met with many people—but I declare, I never did see so extraordinary a person as yourself."

“ I'm not in the least extraordinary, my lady,” said MacGopus ; “ I speak plain truth.”

“ But you blow hot and cold with the same breath.”

“ No I don't. You think I do, as the foolish countryman did in the fable. I like to argue. I like to look on both sides, my lady.”

“ Then you mean to say that I am extremely silly, or selfish, or worldly, in opposing my son's marriage with Miss Lovell ?”

“ I mean no such thing,” said MacGopus. “ I cannot enter into your ladyship's views, because I never was a marquess's daughter, nor a baron's mother. I only say what I think. I cannot appreciate what you feel.”

“ Well, but then, why oppose the marriage ?”

“ I never did,” said MacGopus. “ On the contrary, I told you how you might put an end to it.”

“ I shall adopt your advice.”

“ It won't succeed if you do,” said the Doctor.

“ Why, five minutes ago you said it would.”

“ So I did,” said the Doctor ; “ but then your ladyship had not told me what sort of

person the Parson's daughter was. I had heard George speak of her; but I have heard so many lovers describe their mistresses, that I have learnt to put but very little faith in their accuracy. Your ladyship, however, admits the likeness to what I supposed would win him, and to what he himself depicted as a portrait of his beloved. That alters the case."

"Why then," said her ladyship, "we end where we begun."

"No we don't," said the Doctor. "I started by opposing the marriage—now I end by supporting it."

"Have you become rational yet?" said Lord Weybridge, opening the door, and addressing the Doctor; "May I come in, and sit down in peace?"

"As far as I am concerned, yes," said the Doctor; "for I am going. I always conceive, when my host abandons *me*, that it is time I should retire. I did not think it right to leave her ladyship alone; but now that you have thought proper to return, I'm off."

"To-morrow we start," said Lord Weybridge; "so sit down and finish your wine."

"I have finished my wine."

“ Will you have some more ?”

“ None, I thank you.”

“ Come, Doctor,” said Lady Frances, “ stay for coffee.”

“ I never drink coffee, my lady.”

“ Do not go this minute,” said her ladyship, who, not being yet accustomed to the strange, abrupt manners of the Doctor, felt assured that if he departed in his present humour, he would never return.

“ I must,” said MacGopus.

“ Well, shake hands,” said Lord Weybridge. “ Good night, old fellow. Will you come down to Severnstoke?—we shall be there for a week or ten days, I dare say.”

“ We'll see. If Lady Frances wants my opinion or advice, perhaps her ladyship will summon me,” said the Doctor, again laughing to himself with exultation at having, as he truly enough believed, puzzled her ladyship, as to his character, most amazingly.

“ I,” said Lady Frances, with one of those smiles for which she was *renommée*, “ shall be always happy to see you.”

“ Ah,” said the Doctor, “ your ladyship is

very good." And so making his bows and shaking hands with mother and son, the gallant Philosopher betook himself to his Tusculum in the New Road.

CHAPTER X.

—————“Tears

Stood upon her cheeks, as doth the honey-dew
Upon a gathered lily almost withered.”

SHAKSPEARE.

It would be impossible properly to describe the sensation produced upon Emma and her friend by the contents of Mr. Lovell's letters. That to Fanny, announced the result of his interview with the Squire, as well as his promise, neither to follow nor molest her; and a declaration of his intention to make her an annual allowance of three thousand pounds per annum, a resolution which appeared so liberal in its character to Emma, that she ventured to hope it might, by exhibiting to Fanny, not only the strength of his affection for her, but his con-

viction of her perfect innocence from every imputation which circumstances or the misrepresentation of servants might have cast upon her, induce the lady to overlook the past and return to her home and her natural protector; but all her avowals of admiration of the Squire's conduct produced only a faint smile upon Fanny's countenance, changed almost instantly to an expression, which convinced her friend, that the offence, whatever it might be, which he had committed was considered unpardonable by his lady, and that their separation was irrevocable.

But even her own position, and all the circumstances connected with it, appeared to occupy but a secondary place in the mind of Mrs. Harbottle. The dreadful intelligence of Harvey's death had thrown into shade all selfish considerations, and although it appeared to Emma that she exhibited less wildness of manner, less eagerness and anxiety of mind after the fatal catastrophe had been announced to her, than while she was occupied solely with her own peculiar grief and misfortunes, the helplessness and wretchedness, against which she had during the previous days struggled, appeared entirely to

overcome her. She had exerted herself to take the deciding step of her life, and under the operation of that stimulus she had endured much of mental excitement and bodily fatigue. The suspense, in which she naturally existed until she heard the result of her husband's conversation with Mr. Lovell, was now terminated: she knew her fate; she knew that by the line of conduct Harbottle had been induced to pursue, her character was cleared—her quitting him justified. So far the circumstances of her case were altered; while the death of one whom she had so much esteemed, and who was remotely the cause of the general break-up at Binford, coming so suddenly to her knowledge, changed the nature of her feelings and excited in her bosom, which before had been agitated by her own personal distresses, a new and deeper feeling of regret for another.

“I am easier at heart to-day,” said Fanny to Emma; “I can cry—but, Emma——happiness for me is gone for ever; ——”

“My dearest friend,” said Miss Lovell, “you must, indeed, calm yourself; this dreadful accident to poor Charles Harvey——”

“For mercy's sake,” said Fanny, “in pity,

spare me ; never, as you value my existence, name his name. Poor ! poor Charles Harvey ! — he is gone ! There can be no harm now in owning how much I esteemed him, how much I admired him. But, dearest, dearest Emma, henceforward, from this hour, name him not !

“ Rely upon me,” said Emma ; “ although I cannot but deeply grieve to see you so much affected by——”

“ Affected !” interrupted Fanny. “ Oh ! Emma ! Oh ! if I could tell you all I have suffered !—all the horrors——”

“ Again,” said Miss Lovell, “ let me intreat you to calm yourself. Trust to my discretion ; never again will I touch upon this subject——”

“ Poor, poor Charles !” again sighed Fanny, as her head dropped on the pillow, already bathed with her tears.

Lovell's letter to his daughter, was little more than a duplicate of that to her friend, except that it omitted some of the details which her's contained, connected with Harbottle's arrangements, under the circumstances of her separation. Harbottle had himself left Binford, and several of the servants had been discharged ;

but he proposed, it appeared, to return thither, in order that he might maintain his dignity and respectability by entertaining some parties of his convivial companions at the Hall, and thus exhibit his independence of spirit and strength of mind; for although he never could venture to suggest that the loss of his wife was the consequence of any misconduct of her's, he was determined that nobody should suppose him to be so weak of purpose or undetermined in character, as to be shaken or affected by her voluntary and sudden separation from him.

Amongst the principal points in Lovell's letter to his daughter, his anxiety for her return home appeared particularly prominent, and she replied to his desire to see her back again, that she should only delay her journey homewards until Fanny was sufficiently restored, to be able to enter into the ordinary amusements and occupation of Mopeham House.

It was not until the expiration of the third day, that Fanny felt herself competent even to join the family circle down stairs. She was anxious to explain to her aunt the conditions under which she alone would consent to continue an inmate at her house; and Miss Jarman was

delighted, from the conversation which passed between them, to find that the allowance proposed by her husband was so liberal, as at once to stamp his view of the circumstances under which she had fled from his society ; but it was not at all difficult for Fanny to perceive, that she had taken a step for the preservation of her character nearly as desperate as that adopted by the memorable nuns of Cottingham ; and that no vestal ever was buried alive in greater security than she should be, immured in her present domicile in the society of Miss Jarman and her friend Miss Budd.

The young Count Alexis de Montenay, who made his appearance after breakfast, was to be sure a great relief to the general dullness of the *coterie*. There was a gaiety and grace in his manner—a playfulness, natural and constitutional, which rendered all he said agreeable, and all he did amusing. He appeared to pay more attention to Emma than Fanny ; and it must be admitted that Emma, in the naturalness of her character and disposition, seemed to encourage a preference, which, within such limits as she proposed for it, there could be no great reason for her concealing.

The occupations of the Count, and his amusements, kept him a good deal separated from the ladies; he breakfasted and dined early, so that it was only in the evenings that they had much of his society; his time was much occupied in acquiring the English language, and in order to begin his favourite study betimes in the morning, he generally retired early to rest at night.

Mrs. Harbottle appeared to take more pleasure in his society than her friend, although, as has already been observed, the Count evidently preferred Emma to her, and his little *galantries* spoken in a foreign language with a broken accent, amused and pleased both the ladies. Had it not been for him, the monotony of Mopeham would have been dreadful; the mistress of the house moved out never, and never permitted Miss Budd to quit her—a pony phaeton, chiefly for the conveyance of the Count to the town, about half a mile distant, was the only carriage on the establishment, and the only presentable neighbour lived at a considerable distance. However, Mr. Lovell had been directed by the Squire to inform his lady that whenever she wished it, her own chariot with her favourite pair of horses should

immediately be sent to her, and the Squire farther added, that he hoped she would make no scruple in letting Mr. Lovell know when she desired to have it.

Altogether the separation between these people had something in it very extraordinary, and Emma, who never could extract the real truth from her friend, began almost to be a convert to Harbottle's cause; she had heard Fanny here, at the very last moment, calling upon the name of the man to whom she had confessed herself almost attached, and seen her decidedly more affected by his death than by any other event which had occurred during the whole progress of the affair; and here was her husband, deserted, and avowedly detested by his wife, loading her with liberality, and heaping favours and attentions upon her, even in the minutest particulars.

That Emma's mind ever misgave her, or that she for a moment doubted her father's propriety in permitting her to accompany Mrs. Harbottle, cannot be said; but it must be admitted, that so many odd, and to her, inexplicable circumstances had occurred since their departure from Binford, that she felt every disposition to obey

her parent's injunctions and return home as soon as she possibly could, without disarranging the comfort and tranquillity of her friend.

While things were thus proceeding at Mopeham, Mrs. Harbottle gradually recovering from the excess of grief into which she had been plunged, Emma looking forward to home, and Count Alexis gaining ground every day in the good graces of both ladies, Lord Weybridge, who doubted a little the accounts brought to London by his lady mother, of the events which had occurred at Binford, and startled a little by her earnestness and activity to prevent his return thither, took occasion the day before their departure for Worcestershire, to write to Lovell in the most friendly terms, telling him that he had heard from lady Frances of the sudden flight of the Squire's lady, and of her being accompanied by Miss Lovell—that although he felt he had no right to make any further inquiries upon the subject, he could not but recollect the happy hours he had passed in his and Miss Lovell's society, which recollections, added to the deep interest those associations had inspired, induced him to inquire what the cause of separation between Harbottle and his lady

really was, perfectly certain, that having permitted his amiable and exemplary daughter to accompany the lady, he could have no difficulty in furnishing him with such information, as might, by justifying Mrs. Harbottle, entirely exonerate Miss Lovell and himself from the charge which might otherwise be adduced against them, of protecting vice or supporting impropriety; that he was quite sure what the answer he should receive, would be—that the anxiety he felt upon the subject, would, he trusted, be a sufficient apology for the intrusion, and he remained, &c. &c. &c.

To this letter Lord Weybridge received the following answer.

Binford Rectory, Oct. 4, 18—

“DEAR LORD WEYBRIDGE,

“In acknowledging your lordship’s kind letter of yesterday, permit me in the first place, to return you my sincere thanks for the interest you are good enough to express for myself and my daughter. I do assure you, that nothing can be more gratifying to me, nor I am sure more agreeable to her, than to feel that we are not forgotten under the circumstances which

have occasioned your lordship's removal from our neighbourhood—

“ Being thus flattered by your attention, it naturally follows that your lordship should feel anxious for some information, upon a point which, I admit, places the characters of three persons in a very doubtful position. If I could explain the circumstances under which Mrs. Harbottle so promptly decided to quit her husband, I should have no difficulty in exonerating her and ourselves, who, in the minds of many here, and I fear in the minds of some who are gone hence, are labouring under a suspicion, if not of impropriety, at least of incaution beyond vindication; but I cannot do it—I can afford you no satisfactory reason for the lady's flight—no justification for her abrupt departure. Our characters must stand or fall by the tenour of our foregone lives, and we are, it must be admitted, considerably strengthened, by the fact, that Mr. Harbottle, who is looked upon by many as an injured man and a deserted husband, has bestowed upon his wife a most liberal allowance, has removed from his service the domestics she declined to take with her, and, in short, has exhibited by every

means in his power, his conviction of her innocence and propriety.

“ The real ground of their disunion is incompatibility of temper. This is admitted by both parties. The immediate cause of their sudden separation, therefore, matters little, and if it did, as I have already said, I am so pledged to *her* that I could not explain it even to your lordship, whose good opinion I am so anxious to retain.

“ My daughter will remain with her friend only as long as it appears essential to Mrs. Harbottle's comfort, and the safety of her health. She will then return; but I apprehend the best days of Binford are past. The Hall I suspect, if not deserted, will be occupied by persons not exactly suitable to our quiet habits, and Lady Frances I apprehend—your lordship, of course, knows best—has quitted Dale Cottage for ever.

“ I was quite sure what your lordship's feelings about poor Charles Harvey would be. The circumstances are peculiarly painful,—it seems that he met with Colonel Bradfield's shooting party accidentally, and having joined it, was invited by the Colonel to dine with

him. At this dinner some bets were made about the relative strength of wines, or quantities of wine which different men could drink, and Harvey, who had been in extremely low spirits during and after dinner,⁸ was induced to swallow more port or claret, or whatever the wine suggested for the experiment might have been, than he was in the habit of drinking; he had no servant with him when he left Colonel Bradfield's, but rode off with one or two of the neighbours from whom he parted at some point of the road, and made directly across Broustead Common on his way to the Mordaunts with whom he was on a visit. He knew the country well, and if he had been perfectly collected would have remembered that a gravel pit had been opened in the middle of the common, right in his path from road to road, and which was most shamefully left without any railing or other protection. It was in this pit he was found with his horse, both dead, soon after daylight, when the labourers came to work at the pit. In the fall of the horse poor Harvey had pitched over its head, and the spine was dislocated, he had else no mark or

bruise about his person, and must have died instantaneously.

“ His remains were removed to his own place in Berkshire, from Mr. Mordaunt's, whither they had been conveyed after the coroner's inquest had been held, a ceremony perfectly useless on this occasion, except as establishing the fact of finding the body by the labourers. There never was a more gentlemanly being created, and never, that I have seen, a more general display of unaffected grief, than his premature death has occasioned.

“ I shall not fail to acquaint my daughter with your kindness in making inquiries after her. The day may come when I, or if I am gone, she may be enabled to explain our present mystery ; but if I duly appreciate your lordship's feelings towards us, I think I may venture to hope that you will give us credit for having acted neither imprudently nor improperly, but as it became Christians ; I should, however, add, that at this moment, Emma herself is as ignorant as your lordship of the *immediate cause* of the separation. Before I die, if circumstances do not permit of her knowing it earlier, I shall confide

it to her for her own justification; but as I assure you most solemnly and sincerely it affects no human being except the parties themselves, its immediate declaration, if it were not prevented by the most important considerations that can exist, would reflect not the slightest shadow of blame upon Mrs. Harbottle, who with myself must alone remain in possession of the truth.

“ I mention this, because, even supposing me to blame, it is I who am wholly to blame; Emma is, I repeat, entirely ignorant of the facts of which I am in possession, and in supporting and accompanying Mrs. Harbottle acts not only under my sanction, but with my advice, both of which she considers sufficient justifications for her own conduct, without stopping to investigate that of her father.

“ In the sincerest wish and prayer, that every happiness may attend your lordship through life, and with gratitude for your kindness and the interest you continue to express towards us,

“ I remain, dear Lord Weybridge,
Your Lordship's faithful servant,
W. LOVELL.”

Lord Weybridge. K 3

P.S.—“ There is a probability, if I should be sufficiently strong, of our being in London before Christmas ; should your lordship be in town at that period, we shall hope to meet you.”

This letter which, according to Lord Weybridge's desire, the Rector addressed to him in Worcestershire, and which his lordship duly received there, was not sufficiently satisfactory for him to shew to his mother as a sort of “ certificate” of the family prudence ; however, when he recollected that in her first letter on the subject, she suggested that Emma had taken the journey without her father's sanction, he felt comparatively easy, not that his doubts and misgivings were entirely at rest. It seemed so strange that a young woman should be forced or persuaded into such an excursion, without knowing what grounds her companion had for undertaking it, that between his apprehensions on the one hand, and the constant worry to which he was exposed on the other, by the persuasions and suggestions, and insinuations and declarations of Lady Frances, he began, most certainly, not to waver in the constancy of his

attachment to Emma, but to doubt more seriously than he ever yet had done, whether it were likely to terminate propitiously.

According to her well-devised design, Lady Frances persuaded George just to visit the “dear” Duchess for a day or two on their way into Worcestershire, and to invite her and her lovely daughter to accompany them, a bidding which they most readily accepted. And then on his approach to Severnstoke, he was welcomed by his tenants with bands of music, and garlands of flowers, and passed under triumphal arches built across the road. And there were roastings of sheep and ringings of bells, and the bright eyes of Lady Katharine, and the Duchess full of vivacity and gaiety, were gleaming and sparkling around him, and the gentlemen of the county were mustered there to give him a cordial reception and the bettermost inhabitants of the neighbouring town, and amongst them the clergyman and his daughters; and when the Lady Katharine, began to ridicule the two gauky girls who stood blushing up to their elbows, George felt an inward horror; but whether of the *gaucherie* at which the aristocratic ladies were

sneering, or at the idea of having a wife of his own, perhaps, subjected to a similiar ordeal, it is impossible to say. Certain it is, that from the day of his arrival at Severnstoke, until the expiration of a fortnight, he thought less of Emma than he ever had thought of her, during any similar period of time since their acquaintance had first begun.

Events had occurred during that fortnight which could not have been foreseen; and while George was in the hands of his friends, gradually melting into their opinions, and leaning towards their advice, Emma was unconsciously entangling herself in an affair at Mopeham, for which, perhaps, the reader is not altogether prepared.

It was clear that the plan of domesticating George with one agreeable family, which had been suggested by MacGopus, had been to a certain extent successful, but beyond that particular circumstance the change of his position in society did a great deal towards diverting his thoughts into new channels. He was sensitively alive to the force of ridicule, and the incessant fire kept up by his mother, the Duchess and her daughter, upon the school of girls, of

which he felt himself conscious Emma was a disciple, had the effect of hindering his speaking of her as he had been formerly accustomed to do, while the varied attractions of the brilliant creature with whom he was now constantly associated, engaged his attention, and occupied his thoughts.

Lady Frances who watched over the process of ridding his mind of an object, the exclusion of which from it was the height of her ambition, did not fail to enlarge upon the unsatisfactoriness of Mr. Lovell's letter, which, (after all his doubts respecting its character) her son had shown her; his doing which it must however be admitted was a strong proof of his own improved opinion of its nature and value. A severer blow however awaited him, than the apparent imprudence of Emma's flight with Fanny, and one which certainly threatened to complete the work of which Lady Frances had so ingeniously laid the foundation.

CHAPTER XI

“ Against the head which innocence secures,
Insidious malice aims her darts in vain,
Turn'd backwards by the pow'rful breath of heaven.”
DR. JOHNSON.

FANNY'S recovery at Mopeham was slower than Emma had hoped. We have already seen that after the arrival of the letter, announcing the death of their poor friend Harvey, her grief appeared to take a more settled character ; and the tears, which by an effort she had previously checked, flowed in torrents from her eyes.

To Emma this continued appearance of unmitigated sorrow—in common with every thing connected with Harvey—was extremely painful. She saw in her friend's manner a depth of in-

terest displayed, whenever the slightest allusion was made to him or his untimely fate, which did not appear at all consonant with the professions she had made before Emma undertook the mediation between them, and which to a certain extent justified, in Emma's mind, the violence which she concluded must have been adopted towards her by her husband; which violence her separation from him was calculated to expose to the world, and in which exposure her father had permitted her to be so painfully and prominently connected.

“ My dearest Fanny,” said Emma, who was anxiously hoping to be permitted to return to Binford, “ you really should struggle with the feelings which you express with regard to poor Charles. Nobody can more deeply regret his loss than myself, and under such circumstances; but separated as you now are from your husband, and intimate as you previously were with Mr. Harvey, the devoting your undivided regrets to his loss, cannot fail to give an idea that you are more interested about him than, in point of fact, is quite consistent with your present position in society, and which may, to ill-natured persons, afford the opportunity

of saying—or at least a reason for thinking—that your disunion from Mr. Harbottle was caused by some discovery on his part of a too favourable opinion of yours towards his friend.”

“His friend!” said Fanny. “Oh! such a friend! Heaven knows, and you know, Emma, every feeling of my heart towards Charles Harvey. You know the sacrifice I made to what I considered due to my husband and myself. Surely—surely *you* cannot believe that I permitted any feeling to exist in my mind, which could call for censure?”

“Do not misunderstand me,” said Emma, who feared she had wounded her suffering companion. “I know you: it is not in *my* mind that you will suffer by the course you are pursuing. I mean that to those people who will, when you are well enough to see them, visit you here—your aunt herself—and especially to her friend and companion, Miss Budd—your constant recurrence to the one subject—will have—nay, as far as the last person is concerned, I believe has had an appearance the least desirable.”

“Emma,” said Fanny, “if I could tell you all—if I dare open my heart, you would won-

der rather that I am alive, than that I lament so deeply the death of our poor unoffending friend."

"Why, Fanny," said Emma, smiling faintly, "you this moment told me I *did* know all the secrets of your heart connected with him."

"All but one," said Fanny. "One—one remains untold, and must remain so. But I repeat what I have before said, which, as you appear to think, is inconsistent with what I have said since, that as far as thought, or wish, or act is concerned, my acquaintance with and affection for Charles Harvey were, from first to last, as disinterested and unimpassioned, as your present intimacy with Count Alexis de Montenay."

"The cases are not parallel," said Emma. "The Count delights me, I admit. The natural frankness of his manner, the *naïveté* of his character and conversation, are to me charming; but then—"

"Oh, my dear Emma," said Fanny, "you need not vindicate yourself, or endeavour to extenuate your most justifiable affection for your young friend. I merely mention that as the

most immediate instance to which I would compare mine. I meant really neither more nor less than that my regard and affection for Charles were as perfectly divested of every tender feeling, as your friendship and regard for the Count are."

"Then why—why, let me ask you, once for all," said Miss Lovell—"why, in reflecting upon the very important events of the last few days, do your thoughts ever and incessantly cling to the one point. You endure the parting from your husband—you sustain the shock of quitting your home, and of leaving the friends who loved and esteemed you—you are content to endure the malice and slander which the world will doubtlessly endeavour to accumulate upon you—and all these without a sigh; but the moment Charles is mentioned—"

"Oh, do not question me," said Fanny; "in justice trust me—in mercy spare me! I am innocent, but irrevocably wretched. Your father knows all; he alone must know it; and knowing it, he sanctions my conduct by giving me your society. He pledges himself to my aunt, who, like yourself, is in ignorance as to the real cause of my separation from my hus-

band. Never, therefore, press me more, but let me weep. My tears are my only consolation—they are guiltless, but they must have way.”

Emma found it was in vain to touch this theme; and the voice of Count Montenay on the staircase, calling on Emma to come and take her accustomed ride, induced her, rather than permit him to see Fanny bathed in tears, to obey his summons, and take leave of her friend, promising not again to recur to the theme of their past conversation, but still advising her, as much as possible, to check a sensibility which she knew had seriously attracted much of the notice of her aunt and Miss Budd.

Miss Budd was, as we know, of a most rigid turn of mind—long past the age of love or hope, her disposition had curdled, and she was the most inveterate enemy of any thing which savoured of levity of manners, or gaiety of temper. The Count, who was universally a favourite with everybody else, was considered by her as far too lively to be proper, and much too presuming to be correct; and his free and easy manner of running about the house, and calling for this lady, and hunting for another, and his

dancing and his tricks, which in the exuberance of his spirits he was remarkably fond of exhibiting, kept the antiquated virgin in a state of agitation, from which she hoped to be relieved in a few days, when that volatile visitor was to leave their else quiet, blest retreat.

Emma made no secret of the pleasure she took in the society of the gentle Alexis. They became inseparable companions; and Miss Jarman, whose character was exactly the reverse of her faithful companion's, if she could but have recollected them, would have made numberless jokes at their expense.

In the course of this agreeable intimacy, Emma received, as indeed she had expected, a letter from her father, which perhaps it may be as well to submit to the reader, as giving a slight sketch of the state of Binford.

“ *Binford, Oct. 19, 18—.*

“ MY DEAR CHILD,

“ Another week has elapsed, and still you are absent—this worries me—not only for that I love your dear society, but because I fear Mrs. Harbottle does not sufficiently rally to permit you to quit her—I have not, therefore,

written to her to-day, lest I should increase her agitation by recurring to scenes and circumstances, in which she must be so much and naturally interested. You can read to her such parts of this letter as you may conceive she would like to hear, but it is better, I think, to leave to conversation, any remarks upon our town and its inhabitants.

“ Mr. Harbottle is in London—he returns, I hear, next week,—it seems that he is mixing in all the gayest—if the most mischievous scenes in town, even if this dull season of the year may be called gay—and is described by a friend of mine, who met him one day last week, apparently reckless in his career; he did not make the slightest reference to Mrs. Harbottle, in the conversation he had with my friend, but invited him to the Hall for the hunting season, as he had always done before. Most of the servants have been discharged, and a new domestic administration is formed, of which his old minister, Mr. Hollis, is the premier.

“ Dale Cottage is deserted; Lady Frances left this suddenly, and went to her son in London, after which they proceeded together

to his place in Worcestershire; he wrote me a long and kind letter, to which I returned an answer, giving him all the account I could, of your expedition into the west, but I have not heard since.

“It is curious that you should have met Count de Montenay in a place where I never should have expected to find such a person—your account of him is most favourable—tell him that I quite well remember his late father, and that we were great friends during the time he resided in England; and tell him, that if he feels inclined to visit me, I shall be delighted to receive him for as long a period as he can spare, at the Rectory. It is quite curious to see how connexions come round, and quite romantic that you should have found the son of an old friend of mine, domesticated at the house of the aunt of a friend of yours.

“You must use your own influence, and my entreaty, with Mrs. Harbottle, to check the violent grief with which you tell me she continues to be afflicted; melancholy as all the circumstances of the case are, she ought to feel comparatively happy that she has nothing in the world to reproach herself with. The subject is

one upon which I most unwillingly touch, and I must intreat of you, when you return to me, to abstain from recurring to it. I make this request, because I perceive in your letters a strong disposition to inquire more particularly into some parts of the affair, and I am bound as solemnly as man can be, to divulge none of them ; it will, therefore, spare both of us time and pain if we come to this right understanding now—I know you too well to expect a question upon the subject, after this gentle admonition.

“ I have seen nobody since your departure ; your aunt is, of course, still with me, and is very much affected, I may almost say distressed, at your absence. I believe, from what she has heard, that Lady Frances takes a very unfavourable view of your expedition, but rely upon your own conscience, your sense of duty to others, and have faith in your father. I hear from the same quarter—a correspondent of her ladyship's—that the party at Severnstoke are extremely gay, and that the Duchess of Malvern and her daughter, Lady Katherine, are there. I suspect Lord Weybridge—kind as the tone and manner of his letter to me is,

is not exactly what our friend, George Sheringham, was. His ideas, they say, are princely ; the improvements he projects in Worcestershire, magnificent ; and the preparations making for his reception at his town house, in the spring, carrying on upon the most brilliant and extensive scale.

“It is curious to peep through the loopholes of the world, and see the extraordinary changes and mutations of society, and the suddenness with which they are effected. Who, a month since, would not have chosen to be Harbottle, rather than Sheringham ? the one, rich beyond care, the other, poor, and in a perilous, though noble profession—and now, to see the one elevated to nobility, and affluence, and consequence, and the other, debased, and degraded, a wanderer from home, from the comforts of which he is cut off by his own misconduct.

“Make my kindest remembrances to your friend ; bid her calm herself, and tell her, that in my opinion, the sooner she lets you leave her, the better for herself. New objects, new associations, will relieve her mind, which cannot fail to be filled with her own affairs, so long as she has you constantly with her. My best

compliments await Miss Jarman, for whose very kind letter I am much obliged ; owing to her having forgotten to put the address on it, it had a circuitous journey to find me, however, it arrived safe, and I am quite happy to find that her niece has made so favourable an impression.

“ Again I say, Emma, come—come home the moment you can do so consistently with Mrs. Harbottle’s health and wishes ; and if you choose to volunteer a seat in the carriage, to the Count, and see no impropriety in making the offer, I shall be glad to have him here for a week or ten days, on his way towards London ; tell him so, and see if you can prevail upon his excellent hostess to part with him. Once more, farewell ; may every blessing await you, and good providence bring you back to the fond heart of your affectionate father,

W. LOVELL.

“ I see how it is, my dear Emma,” said Fanny, to Miss Lovell, when she had read such parts of this letter to her, as she thought proper for her to know, “ your dear, good

parent is unhappy and wretched without you—so shall I be—but what are my claims upon you compared to *his* ? so, as I cannot have you always with me, I shall insist upon your returning home immediately.”

“My father, you see,” said Emma, “seems to think that my quitting you, will be a relief to you—you will be forced more completely on your own resources, and you must, whether you like it or not, mix with the more general society of the house. I certainly have a mind, if I go, to engage the Count as my cavalier.”

“You don’t really mean it,” said Fanny, “I never heard of such a scheme.”

“My father sanctions it,” said Emma, archly ; “and when he supports me with his approbation, I never inquire why ; I take it for granted that he is anxious to receive a visit from the son of his old friend, and sees no sort of impropriety in our travelling together. I confess I perceive none.”

“I haven’t a word to say,” said Fanny, “it sounds odd, but—”

“Yes, but to us who know the real state of the case—”

“As you say,” interrupted Fanny, “in the

state of your heart, I don't think there will be any serious danger in it."

Miss Budd, however, was of a very different opinion when the proposition was made. The Count was literally overcome with joy, which he displayed with perhaps more sincerity than civility towards the lady of the house in which he had been so kindly received, when Miss Lovell mentioned her father's wish to see him at Binford. It was so convenient—all the way on his road—and then his dear Miss Lovell, or Emma as he even ventured to call her sometimes, for a companion on the journey; but Miss Budd, although she said nothing, looked vinegar and verjuice, and Miss Jarman, having declared that she could not interfere to prevent so pleasant an excursion, could not let the subject drop without warning Emma to take care of "What do you call the thing on one's left side?"

"Heart, madam," said Miss Budd.

"Yes," said Miss Jarman, "of her heart on the road homeward."

The caution was a work of supererogation. Emma's heart, unfortunately perhaps, was not her's to lose, and although she found Fanny so

entirely absorbed with her own affairs, as to leave her no time for the discussion of those of her friend, the very anxiety to hear of George — nay, the desire again to see the place where she first had met him, preyed upon her spirits, and considerably sharpened her readiness to obey the calls of duty, and return to her paternal roof.

A day or two afterwards she again tried her friend upon the subject of their separation, and Fanny, conscious as we have already seen she was, of the uneasiness which Mr. Lovell was suffering from the absence of his darling daughter, spoke more calmly and composedly than usual of her return. The terms upon which they separated were, a constant and continuous correspondence, and the condition, that nothing should interfere with the daily communication of their feelings, hopes, fears, wishes, and intelligence by letters ; a few more similar conversations gradually moderated Fanny's dread of losing her, and early on the following Thursday Emma quitted Mopeham, having taken leave of Fanny the night before, without disturbing her from a sleep, which she had procured by means of an opiate, and in which it was held

best, by the council of ladies, she should remain, without undergoing the pain of parting from a friend whom she so dearly loved, and whom it was quite uncertain when she should see again.

That Count Montenay accompanied Miss Lovell on her return, is a fact which must not be concealed. They started by day-dawn, so as to reach Binford to a late dinner, the necessity of sleeping on the road being obviated by the absence of the invalid, whom they now left behind them.

It might, perhaps, be thought rather edifying to detail the conversations which passed between the independent "Parson's daughter," and her French friend; but they would scarcely repay the trouble of putting them to paper. The Count, roused earlier in the morning than usual, was silent, and even sleepy, and after affecting to be extremely gay and playful for about half an hour, threw himself into a corner of the carriage, and after struggling with his somnolency for some time, went into a sound nap, while Emma, not sorry to be left to her own meditations, after a fortnight or three weeks constant "talk," placed herself in a

similar attitude in the other corner, and lulled by the motion of the chariot, and actuated by the force of example, also fell into a most agreeable slumber.

Anxiously, as the day went on, did the excellent Lovell listen for the sound of approaching wheels: six o'clock came—no Emma: seven—no Emma; the ticking of the clock on the chimney-piece sounded louder and heavier to him than usual, amid the stillness which he and his sister preserved, in the hopes of hearing the welcome roll of the carriage—at last, the ringing of the bell, the barking of the dogs, and the trampling of horses, announced the approach of his darling child, and at half-past seven the faithful Emma was safely clasped to the heart of her kind and anxious parent.

Lovell was overjoyed to see the Count, whom he received with every mark of kindness and hospitality, and Miss Lovell the elder pronounced an opinion to Emma, after dinner, that she had never seen any thing so handsome in her life, especially French. The travellers were, however, too much fatigued to “shew” to advantage that night; and, therefore, after tea and a

brief converse, they retired to the rest, of which they appeared to have so much need.

It turned out, perhaps unluckily, that the Squire had returned to the Hall on the very day of Emma's departure from Mopeham. As he was aware that she had been the companion of his wife's extraordinary flight, it was most natural he should seek an interview with her, in order to make some inquiries concerning her, and Lovell, who was particularly anxious that no such interview should take place between Harbottle and his child, was in a sad state of worry lest he should make his appearance at the Rectory, in spite of a prohibition which he had received from the Rector on the morning of their dialogue with closed doors.

It was just the day of trial—if he did not make the experiment of calling that evening, as he was alone at the Hall, or next morning before his expected company arrived, the probability was that he never would subsequently attempt it. He had written to Fanny at Mopeham, but with an obdurate resolution, which Emma at the time endeavoured to soften, his wife returned the letter unopened, and it was from Lovell alone that she would receive the

information that he had made arrangements for the payment to him, in trust for her, of a sum of three thousand five hundred pounds a-year, to be entirely at her own disposal, being, in fact, the same amount as her jointure would have been, had she become a widow.

Lovell was quite convinced that if Harbottle met Emma, or conversed with her upon the subject, he would in some way commit himself, or entangle her in the discussion, which, upon every account, it was most desirable should be avoided, and therefore it was, that he doubly rejoiced in the presence of the Count, who from being (as of course he would during his stay at the Rectory) the companion of Emma's walks and rides, would destroy the chance of a *tête à tête* between her and the Squire.

There were many events near at hand which were little expected by any of the Rectory party, when they laid their heads upon their pillows, on the night of Miss Lovell's return. As the Rector said, it was wonderful to see the suddenness of human mutations, and with how little warning or preparation the greatest changes are effected. But there was one thing

which yet remained unaltered and unchanged, and that was the affection of Emma for Lord Weybridge; of the stability of that feeling Lovell was perfectly convinced in less than half an hour after his child's return, and to say truth, he saw it with pain, for he had heard more of the proceedings at Severnstoke than he had thought it necessary to tell his daughter.

Of the servants—admirable chroniclers—who were left at Dale Cottage, one of the maids was in the habit of hearing regularly from the tall man in the plush garments, who accompanied Lady Frances to London and thence to Worcestershire. There was a *tendre* existing between them, and the hopes and wishes of the servants hall were therefore intimately interwoven with the proceedings of the superior members of the family. From this maid-servant, the elder Miss Lovell's maid derived much information, and it certainly appeared, upon putting together all the different circumstances which the man in the plushes detailed in his different epistles to the maid in the gingham, that Lord Weybridge had given strong evidence of an intention to make Lady Katharine his wife. The maid who knew enough of her own family

concerns to be quite aware of her young mistress's penchant for the noble lord, felt she was doing her old mistress a kindness to open her eyes to the deceitfulness of the peer, which the maid at Dale Cottage most emphatically contrasted with the constancy of her long and liveried correspondent.

From the elder Miss Lovell to her brother, this news was thus as it were subterraneously conveyed, and amongst the different subjects which glanced before her eyes in contemplating the varying and evanescent qualities of mundane matters, the insincerity and heartlessness of George, who had, by every means in his power, evinced his feelings towards Emma, was not one either of the lightest or brightest character. He knew her tenderness—her devotion—her enthusiasm, and he felt sure that such a change in his conduct as the intelligence from Worcestershire seemed to threaten, would go nigh to rob him of the “prop that did sustain his house.” It was this fear and apprehension that induced him to encourage the notion of receiving the gay Count Montenay at the Rectory, in the hope that he might serve to divert his child's thoughts from the one engrossing subject, and

by dividing her time between his agreeable society, and the graver duties of her ordinary domestic life, save her some of those pangs which those only who have lived for years in lingering suspense, to be at last betrayed, can even guess at. How the reverend gentleman's notable scheme succeeded we shall see in the sequel.

CHAPTER XII.

“ She wrote to him a letter
And she sealed it with a ring.”

OLD SONG.

THE reader has now seen that a constant communication was kept up between the reduced establishment at Dale Cottage, and those servants whom Lady Frances had with her at her son's; and although her ladyship's woman might not, upon ordinary occasions, choose to hold “gentle converse” with a man in livery, still when an anxiety for information once seizes the female mind, high or low, many smaller sacrifices are made to the one great object, and accordingly Mrs. Hall made no

scruple of culling intelligence from Robert the footman, touching affairs at Binford.

Through this channel, low and dirty enough to be sure, Lady Frances herself condescended to obtain intelligence of her *ci-devant* neighbours, of whom, it must be admitted, she was particularly jealous and suspicious in as far as her darling George was concerned; more especially after the disclosures unintentionally made to her in the misdirected letter from London, which held firm hold of her mind in opposition to his since apparent indifference; and, therefore, in the hope of picking up a few pearls, her ladyship permitted herself to dabble in the muddy stream of *domestic* correspondence which “tided” between Binford and Severnstoke.

The imaginative disposition of travellers, in their descriptions of scenes and events, is universally admitted; not less certain are the inventive powers of an ingenious letter-writer, more especially when his sphere of action is confined, and the incidents which have occurred to him, few—he or she, in such a case, feels it necessary to enliven the mortal dullness of plain fact with a dash of romance, and reward

the reader for poring over a page or two of business, by affording him at least an equal portion of more lively and generally amusing matter.

This was the case with the red-elbowed correspondent of Robert the footman ; she wrote about him and about herself, to shew the interest she took in him, and to maintain the interest which she truly believed he felt about her. But, in order to entertain him and exhibit the versatility of her own genius, she mixed in her letters much information upon "affairs in general," to which, it must however be admitted, she was more particularly induced, by the solicitude of Robert to "tell him something of what's going on," made, as we have ascertained, at the suggestion of Mrs. Hall, under the direction of her noble mistress, who kept her eye upon the yet quiet village which she had left, as the skilful geologist watches, with deep anxiety, the place where a volcano exists, but which has ceased, for some time, to exhibit its smoke and flame, in expectation of some violent convulsion. It seemed to her ladyship all mined ground, and we know enough of her to be assured that her dread of a match was unconquerable.

The letter which produced the strongest effect upon her ladyship, and which, as it contained scarce any thing about Love, Mrs. Hall borrowed of her fellow-servant, under the pretence of wishing to read it alone, but in fact to submit its contents to her lady, we think it may be as well to subjoin, as a specimen of the style and character of a correspondence doomed so materially to affect the destiny and happiness of two personages of such importance as the Right Hon. George Augustus Frederick, Baron Weybridge, and Emma, only daughter of the Rev. William Lovell, M.A., Rector of Binford, and perpetual Curate of Ormersly, and which, as indicative of the beauties of domestic literature, may be found not quite unworthy of notice.

Dale Cottage.

“DEER ROBERT,—Yours of Sunday cum safe to and,—I am mutch obliged to yew for hall you say, as wel as for Missus Alls civilarity ; ples mak my ruspecks too her, and ope she is wel. as for youre aving ad my air put into a lochete, i niver cud ave thot of sich a thing and shall never foggit it.

“ Yew ask me for noose, noose here is scace. This place is 'nt the same since yew went. The Squirr is at the all, but no sich doins as wen Missis Arbottle was there — all mail creturs now, not a phemale cums nigh the plaice, and the Squirr always inhebrewated. Miss Ollis is gon to toun with her brother Gorge,—they say to be marred to some rich man; but this I think is all fuge, and bleve the Squirr is not so thick with Ollis has eretofore, and as hordered them of. Mister Ollis was very much shag-reend at their suppuration.

“ Miss Hemmer Lovell is returned, but not Missis Arbottle, which has said she shall nivr come back to the Squirr, because thy say he beet her, the nite she went away in the morning—and thy say she was so black and blu with the brewses that she would not take Missus Deffon with hur on account she shud not see the whales wich were to be seen playing round her boddly. Miss Hemmer has not cum aloan. she has brote home a bow wich I hav not seen. a french lord—I here he is very ansum and that Miss Hemmer is very fond of him—her maid you now is as close as whacks and theres no gitin nothing out off her, speshally to

sich as me—wot she is amungst the ladys I cant say, but I sed to her yestardy nowing ow fond Miss Hemmer is of Lord W. that I was afrayed she was cockgetting about with this french nobbelman, and she laffed phit to kill hussell. wech I tuk to meen that eyes right in my conjectures howsowver Robert i never middles nor mucks wich i am sewer is the whysest whey.

“ We ad a goose on Micclemus day wich pot me so in mind of yew, because of what yew used to say aboat good luck; and we drunk hall habsent frends. incloodeng my Lord and my Lady Phransis wich i ope is in jood ealth as i am at present. and so is the knary burds and the vergin knyhtangull wich as a been malting but as now in eye pheathir.

“ So jood bye, send me sum noose of your sylph and wen yew think it lickly you shall cum here, for I feel quit dissolute without you and mop aboat all day for yewer sack—sins the Squirr has begun to shoote the Peasants on his hestate, there is more cumpunny at the All and and sevril grums and helpers hat the Gorges but I never goes out of the gait, except in the ducks of the heavinging praps to Mrs Hervins for hany triffling things we wants—the hold

ooman and i are are good frends. and if we ad
yewer sockity I shud be ass apie has the dey
is long. Adoo, no more at presant. give mi luv
and komps to Missus All from

“ Yewers trully and fatfully

“ MARY GREEN.”

Humble as is the style—strange as is the orthography, and uninteresting as the matter of this letter might, by some, be supposed to be—to Lady Frances it was every thing—M. de Sevigné never wrote any thing half so delightful to her, as Mary Green had written. Emma Lovell returned—coqueting with a young French nobleman! under her father's roof—here was an accession of incident for crimination in the eyes of her son—a defection from prudence, even from virtue as her ladyship made it out, of which the Parson's daughter had been guilty, in accompanying a fugitive wife from the arms and house of her husband, followed up by an *affaire du cœur* with a young foreigner carried on under the paternal eye. This was a new charge in the impeachment of her honour and propriety, or perhaps, under the peculiar circumstances of the

case, we might say a new *count* in the indictment. But however delighted her ladyship was with so much of the discovery as she had already made, she was anxious to obtain further information before she actually sprang the mine which was not only to annihilate the Lunette, but to blow the citadel itself to atoms, and to ascertain the name of the new lover—how to do this she scarcely knew—it was clear that a French title was not likely to “come to hand” at all in its proper form through the medium of such a “speller and putter-together” as Mary Green; and how else could she get at the intelligence she wanted without committing herself to somebody in Binford, and betraying an interest in the Lovells, which she was most anxious nobody in the world should imagine her to feel?

Her ladyship yet had one resource. There was one person to whom she could write, in his professional character, who would be so highly flattered by her application for advice made from under the aristocratic roof of Severnstoke, that, dazzled by her condescension, and blinded by his own vanity, he would, upon a very slight provocation, be as commu-

nicative as she could wish. This was Popjoy, he of the Galen's head—the smart, smug, neat and dapper apothecary, whose assistant her ladyship had proposed as a suitable match for Emma, and to whom she could, as if accidentally, refer, in order to draw him out upon the subject of the Parsonage politics, and so, as she believed, secure the information which she now so ardently desired.

She knew George to be constitutionally sensitive with regard to the deceptions of women. She had already brought him into a very favourable state of mind for her further purposes by devoting herself and enlisting into the cause of persuasion, and as has already been said of ridicule, the Duchess and her beautiful daughter—George was already more than half convinced of the impropriety of Emma's conduct, and that half conviction led him back to a reconsideration of her former conduct with respect to Harvey, and made him doubt the sincerity of Mrs. Harbottle's estimate of Emma's affection for himself—and then he naturally enough asked himself how he had obtained any assurance of Miss Levell's regard and esteem, and as naturally answered himself through the me-

dium of a third person, a lady who almost immediately after the conversation which he had with her, upon this vital subject, had eloped from her husband, and made this very Miss Lovell the partner of her flight.

Lady Frances had watched him during his residence at Severnstoke—there had been various changes of visitors—the Duchess and her daughter remaining however fixtures—she saw that George had made no new confidences—that although he would occasionally seem dull his dullness lasted but a short time. He mixed willingly in all the amusements of the day and all the entertainments of the evening, and she saw that lady Katharine had succeeded in attracting and even fixing his attentions and regards ; they tacitly fell into each others society, joined in the same pursuits, and, in short, at the end of the month, the stay at Severnstoke, which was originally only to have occupied a fortnight, was again lengthened at George's own proposal, and Lady Frances felt sure that, before the next fortnight ended, matters would take the turn she so much desired, and that the *Morning Post* would speedily have to announce the approaching nuptials of Lord Weybridge and the beau-

tiful Lady Katharine Hargrave, third daughter of her Grace the Duchess of Malvern.

But still with this conviction on her mind, Lady Frances thought the *denouement* of the French Count would at once produce the crisis she was so anxiously anticipating—that her son would turn suddenly round from the disclosure of the falsehood and frivolity of the sly and silent Emma, and make an instant declaration to the splendid creature who had been now so long domesticated with him, and who bore in her countenance all the beauty for which her illustrious family had been so long distinguished, and in her mind all that, which Lady Frances held to be essential in the world, and of which it was quite clear the Parson's daughter possessed not one atom.

Thus excited and thus resolved, the Lady Frances Sheringham, after having condescended to read Miss Green, her housemaid's letter, written in confidence to Mr. Robert Long, her ladyship's footman (that confidence having been violated at her ladyship's own suggestion by her ladyship's own woman Mrs. Hall), sat down to address herself to her own apothecary at Binford. Perhaps the reader who is offered the perusal of

her ladyship's epistle, without making any such sacrifice as those which her ladyship made in order to obtain a sight of Miss Green's, had better see what her ladyship said to the Binford Paracelsus.

Severnstoke House,

Oct. 1830.

“DEAR SIR,—I do not know how it is, but the camphor julep which I get here is totally different from that which you were good enough to send me when I was at Binford: somehow the camphor curdles in the liquid, and is extremely unpleasant to my palate. I am going I know to be very troublesome, but if you could do me the favour to make me up two or three good-sized bottles, and have them packed carefully, I should feel extremely obliged. Perhaps you would take the trouble to let some of your people carry them to the cottage, and the servants there will forward them without any farther inconvenience to you. Perhaps the difference in the julep is all imaginary, and occurs only from the sort of feeling we naturally have towards any medicine from which we have derived benefit in particular

time, and from particular persons. I am sure I have every reason to be grateful for your professional care of me.

“I hope Mrs. Popjoy, and your very nice daughter are quite well. I expect very soon to hear of her marriage. I am sure you will not keep her to yourselves long. I know nothing of Binford politics here, and any thing you can tell me will be interesting, for I quite love the neighbourhood.

“I was very sorry to hear that there seems no chance of a reconciliation between Mr. and Mrs. Harbottle. They were excellent people, and I never felt greater regret than at their unfortunate separation. I conclude dear Miss Lovell is returned to her amiable father. I hope you did not mention to your young gentleman, I forget his name, what I hinted about a match in that quarter—I am sure she would be a treasure to any deserving husband.

“With many apologies for the trouble, and begging you to make my compliments to your lady and Miss Popjoy.

“Believe me, dear Sir,

“Your obedient humble Servant,

“FRANCES SHERINGHAM.”

“What !” said Lord Weybridge, who happened to see the direction of this unsophisticated letter “are you in correspondence with our village apothecary ?”

“Professionally,” said Lady Frances.

“Ah, dear Binford,” muttered the baron, as his pen traced the word on the envelope, “I could have been happy enough there.”

“Where is Katharine ?” said Lady Frances, who heard this soliloquy.

“Oh !” said Lord Weybridge, “I am going to ride with her almost directly. I have written to ask my old Doctor here.”

“I’m glad of it,” said Lady Frances,—which she was *not*.

“I don’t know whether he will come,” said his lordship. “He is an odd fellow—but he is an excellent fellow, and I want to talk to him.”

Lady Frances did not half like this apparent desire for an adviser, for she guessed that something important was in her son’s mind, and believing it to be the doubt whether he should make his offer to Lady Katharine, she did not fancy MacGopus quite the sort of person to admire the high-bred woman of fashion and

feared lest he should eulogize as a contrast to the decided nonchalance of her polished manners, the retiring modesty of Miss Lovell, which he had often heard praised, and of which, from what he had heard, until somebody agreed with him, he, professed himself the decided admirer.

To oppose his visit would be destructive to her plan of acceding to all Lord Weybridge's present propositions, and making the *séjour* at Severnstoke as agreeable to him as possible. She, therefore, appeared cordially to acquiesce in the invitation, satisfying herself by a determination, first to discover the history of Emma and her new gallant, and then to ensure the Doctor's most violent opposition to her by vindicating her conduct in his presence, which she now knew enough of him to know would produce the effect she most desired, from the lips of the man to whom her son looked up with respect and veneration in matters of discretion and judgment. Thus, while Lord Weybridge was applying to one medical friend for counsel upon some important question, which he was revolving in his mind, his mother was consulting another of the faculty upon a point of equal

importance to her, and which, in all probability might turn out to be identically the same.

The real truth appears to have been, that George began to feel himself daily getting more and more entangled in the web which his mother, and the Duchess, and her daughter, had been weaving for him. Lady Frances had succeeded in bringing him to feel the impropriety of Emma's conduct, and, as has been just mentioned, he had no proof direct, no testimony coming from her, either of her affection for him, or vindictory of the extraordinary step she had taken. Mr. Lovell's letter, in answer to the one he had written, was any thing but satisfactory; yet with all these accumulating doubts, he felt himself pledged to her, although he also felt that the pledge had been given to a person under very different circumstances, at the time, to those in which she was now placed.

George was not insensible to the attractions of Lady Katharine—nor was he blind to the course he was pursuing. That love formed no part of the inclination he felt for the Duchess's daughter, was plain, for his heart still lingered at the Parsonage, but he was conscious that with all the admiration he felt for his fair

visiter, the constant association, the anxiety of both mothers for the match, the connexion, merits, and charms of the young lady herself, nothing was required but finally to cut all connexion with Miss Lovell in order to bring the other matter to an immediate conclusion. He felt that he could love as he had loved Emma but once in his life—were he sure of her fidelity, and convinced of the propriety of her conduct, he would not hesitate to make any and every sacrifice to redeem the pledge he had given her—but upon that point his doubts had been excited, his fears awakened, and therefore it was, he wished to consult his Mentor. What a delicate crisis was now approaching, and how curious that, at such a moment, when a feather might turn the scale, Lady Frances should have acquired, by dint of her surprising activity, fresh intelligence which must, if confirmed agreeably to her anticipations, make the scale kick the beam.

Having ascertained that MacGopus was invited, it became Lady Frances's first duty to put the Duchess and the young lady *au fait* as to the character of that worthy personage, and accordingly all his merits were, in the

first place, displayed to their knowledge, and then came the corrective exhibition of his defects, and the whole history of his peculiar disposition to contradict; to all of which her ladyship thought it necessary to allude, lest her grace and the younger grace with her, should suddenly take alarm at the abruptness of the new visiter and shorten their stay at Severnstoke, a course of proceeding which would have been most particularly disagreeable to her ladyship.

The party, after various fluctuations, was again reduced to themselves, with occasional additions, at dinner, of one or two dependents of the house, in the shape of the provincial attorney, the rector, whose living was in my lord's gift, and the medical gentleman, with whom Lord Weybridge was perfectly certain the Doctor would have some serious disagreement the very first hour they met, and who was consequently to be invited the next three days, in order that he might not expect an invitation for the next fortnight after.

It appeared altogether as if things were drawing to a close, and that although it would be impossible for a marriage to take place in

the family for some considerable time, it seemed as if the arrangements for such a consummation were very speedily to be made, and rendered irrevocable.

CHAPTER XII.

“ I would be drunk —————

To stupify the sense of inward torment.”

LEE.

IF the reader should be at all desirous of knowing how things were proceeding at Mopeham, the readiest way of satisfying his curiosity will be, to permit him the same sort of inspection of the last letter which Emma Lovell had received from Fanny, as he has already been allowed in the cases of Mary Green and Lady Frances Sheringham.

Mopeham, Oct. 9th, 1830.

“ MY DEAR EMMA,

“ Every day increases my regret at your absence. In vain I try to rally—in vain en-

deavour to divert my thoughts from the horrors of my own position. I have received a letter from my husband, which is in character, both contrite and affectionate; he seems to have entirely abandoned those suspicions of my levity and impropriety of conduct which he so cruelly expressed before our friends and visitors; and yet if he has so satisfied himself, I can in no degree understand how he yet exists. He solicits my return to Binford, promises entire oblivion of all that has passed, and tells me, that he has discarded some of those of his establishment who could not fail to be odious to me, and that even his principal favourite, Hollis, is on the eve of departure.

“ I have answered his letter, and have written to your father, enclosing a copy of that answer. I have firmly and strenuously refused to listen to any suggestion as to my return to Binford Hall, or to any farther association with him. Indeed, I can hardly fancy how he could have brought himself to make the request. His feelings must be more extraordinary than even I imagined, as, if ever the day comes when I may speak out, you will, I am sure, agree with me in thinking.

“At the present moment, considering how I am placed, and considering how happily I should be situated with regard to yourself, if I returned, independently of the resumption of my position in the house of my husband, I have no doubt that your first impression will be unfavourable to the firmness of my resolution not to go back. But when I repeat to you that it is impossible, all comment upon the course I have adopted, and still persist in, may be spared me. I am content to remain here, forgotten by the world, I hope, and seek solace and consolation for what is past, in pursuits, to which, perhaps, I had before devoted too small a portion of my time, and to the task of self-correction and humiliation, of which I stand so much in need.

“Placed by my husband’s pecuniary liberality in comparative affluence, I am endeavouring to profit by the bright example you have set me. I have already planned a school, and have raised a subscription upon your system, for furnishing the neighbouring poor with comforts for the approaching winter, and have found myself encouraged and supported in my efforts by our clergyman here, who seems, in his

degree, to emulate all the virtues and merits of your excellent father, as I in mine am endeavouring to make myself a worthy follower of his daughter.

“ My poor aunt, whose decreasing memory ceases to be a joke, such as, if we had been in our usual spirits when we arrived here, we should have been inclined to consider it, grows more and more oblivious every day; and Miss Budd, who sees in me a rival near the throne, is more cross and ill-natured than ever. She is quite safe as far as I am concerned, for I have no desire to influence my poor aunt one way or the other, although it must be confessed, her partiality for her niece in preference to her “ eligible companion,” is nothing so very marvellous, if we could but make her think so.

“ So you have kept our young friend at the Rectory till now. This surprises me, knowing what the object of his journey eastward was: but, when you tell me he will probably remain with you till Christmas, I am strangely puzzled. He certainly is a very captivating person, and we miss him here, extremely. Even Miss Budd smiled upon him. Pray

remember me kindly to him, and tell him, I expect he will not forget his promise of writing to me.

“ My health, dear Emma, keeps pace, I regret to say, with my spirits. Indeed, the intimate connexion of our mental and bodily affections I have long been aware of; for in those days of what were called my gaiety and happiness, the illnesses of which I so often complained, were always occasioned by mental sufferings, which then it would have been undutiful, and now, would be useless to express. I have, perhaps, enjoyed some bright, sunny hours, and none more bright and sunny than those which I have passed since I knew you. But they are all outweighed and obliterated by occurrences, such as, perhaps, few women ever were mixed up with, and none, in my position in society, could ever have anticipated.

“ I see by the newspaper—which we get here once a week, three or four days old—that Lord Weybridge is still entertaining a party at Severnstoke. Pray tell me, have you heard nothing from him? Possessed, as you are, of the secret of his heart, you need apprehend no

change in such a mind and character as his. Rely upon it, Lady Frances will use every endeavour in her power to keep him from Binford; and, from the provoking circumstance of your absence the day he came to visit you, and when I saw him, the devoted, ardent lover, ready to throw himself at your feet, the link was broken, which you cannot attempt at present to re-unite; for it appears to me to be as impossible for your father to recommence a correspondence with him, as it would be for you to evince any desire of renewing your acquaintance.

“ These unfortunate circumstances I feel most deeply, because I cannot be blind to the mischief I have unconsciously done to your brightest prospects. Years of sorrow and repentance will not free my mind from this conviction, nor relieve me from the misery I suffer in consequence. But of this I am sure, that whatever worldly evil may assail you, or cross you in your path to happiness, your piety, your virtue, and your excellence in every moral duty, must eventually triumph, and secure you the enjoyment of every temporal comfort.

“ My aunt desires to send her affectionate

regards to you, and her love to the Count, whom, when she can recollect his name, she calls *dear* Alexis. Miss Budd is half scandalized at such terms of affection, however, even *she* transmits her best remembrances. So you see, having carried off our general favourite, you must content yourself to be the channel of our general and united regards. Tell your dear, good father, that when it is quite convenient, I should like to hear from him, and have his opinion about my answer to Mr. Harbottle. Tell him the letter required an immediate reply, and being quite assured beforehand of his acquiescence in my views, I ventured to send the answer without consulting him. Indeed, from circumstances which I need not repeat, I am not quite sure that the letter was not written and addressed to me here, in order to ascertain whether I was not somewhere else : this, in my mind, added to the importance of answering by return.

“ Write, my dear Emma, for you are better able to do so than I am.—I grow so unaccountably weak—I rally—I exercise faith and hope, and, in some small degree, charity ; I struggle with my fate and my feelings, and put my trust

in other and better things than those of this world. But I have a sad pain on my heart, which weighs me down, and which I cannot overcome. Farewell, dear Emma, and believe me affectionately your's,

“FRANCES HARBOTTLE.”

“P.S.—I wish—I know you will forgive me—I wish you could find out for me where our poor friend Charles Harvey was buried. All we heard was the name of the house to which his body was first carried after it had been found. I conclude his remains were removed to his own home. It would be a melancholy satisfaction to me to know this. Perhaps your father can tell: ask him *from me*. Emma, adieu!”

“So!” thought Emma, “her mind still lingers there; her heart still yearns for news of him, even though he be dead. There is nothing in her letter which my father may not see. She bids me ask this last, yet leading question:—he shall read it.”

Lovell did read it, and Emma gazed on his fine, expressive countenance with intense anxiety as his eyes followed each line. Accus-

tomed to watch and comprehend each turn of his features, she looked intently till he came to the postscript : she saw no change—no anger—no surprise—no strong emotion as he read it. On the contrary, a benign smile of pity and affection played on his lips, and all he uttered was, “ poor soul !”

Lovell was able to give her the desired information, and directed Emma to tell her, that the remains of the unfortunate Harvey, after having been, in the first instance, carried to Mr. Mordaunt's, were eventually removed to the church of the parish in which his property was situated, (and which, indeed, comprised nearly the whole of it,) and there interred ; and that his uncle, who succeeded to his fortune, had just taken up his abode in the house on the estate, where he proposed to establish his permanent residence.

“ Count,” said Lovell—who, as it may be remembered, had persuaded this sprig of French nobility to remain at the Parsonage for a much longer time than he had originally intended—“ how do you reconcile it to yourself to make so many conquests? Why, here are the united regards of a lady separated from her

husband, and two entirely single ladies into the bargain,—all in one letter.”

“ They are very good,” said the Count, smiling, and dashing away his curling locks of raven black hair from his high, strong forehead ; “ you must send my love back to them Miss Emma.”

“ You may depend upon it I will, Alexis,” said Miss Lovell ; “ but I cannot help thinking, that you will be spoiled in England.”

“ Trust me,” said the Count, in that sort of broken English which is so extremely winning. “ It shall take a great deal to spoil me.”

“ Extremely modest,” said Emma, “ some of us think that enough has already been done, and done too, with no little success.”

“ Ah ! Miss Emma !” said the Count, “ you are so droll—but I don’t mind—I know you don’t really think so.”

How far the Count’s assertion might be borne out by his experience in such matters, it does not become us to determine, certain it was that Emma never seemed half so happy as in his society, and Lovell himself who saw—for who could be blind to it—the pleasure his daughter received in the company of her gay and amiable

visitor, was quite restless and uneasy if the Count was absent for any length of time; in fact it seemed as if he were completely domesticated at the Parsonage, and the elderly ladies in the Paragon, began to talk and wonder what it could mean, and why he staid—and why he did not go—wonderments of which they were not likely to be speedily relieved, as the Parsonage was one of the houses in the parish, into which the members of the “tea and toast” society of Binford, put not their feet.

The reader must have already perceived that with all the shrinking delicacy and diffidence of the blue-eyed Emma Lovell, the mind that was enshrined within that delicate casket was vigorous and independent—resolute and unbending—conscious of the rectitude of her intentions, strong in the purity of her conscience, and implicit in her obedience to her father, she needed only to be confirmed in the impulse of her feelings by his sanction to defy all the envy, the calumny and the uncharitableness of the world. In the case of Harvey and Fanny—satisfied herself at the moment of the excellence of her friend, and feelingly alive to the delicacy and diffi-

culty of her situation, she had stepped from the quiet sphere of her good deeds into a position most arduous for one so young and so inexperienced. She confided in the propriety of her own motives—she spoke the plain language of truth, and she triumphed.

Then when the blow fell, which after all divided Fanny for whom she had already made this incipient sacrifice, from her husband, another call was made upon her fortitude and friendship—this was a step too deciding and too decisive to take without advice—she therefore sought it of her father—his sanction given was never questioned, and the lovely girl set forth upon a pilgrimage to rescue and support her friend.

The last case—that of Count Alexis Montenay—other young women might have been squeamish, and have affected a false delicacy in making the long journey homeward alone with a young French nobleman, without either chaperon or bodkin to play propriety in the carriage—not so Emma, her father had with pleasure recognized in the Count, the son of an old and early acquaintance, and solicited him to make a visit to the Rectory—the course

was obvious—indeed so obvious that Mr. Lovell himself suggested that the Count should be his daughter's companion. Emma took no more thought about it, but assumed her seat in the carriage with as much confidence in herself, and as little care for the world's malice as if she had been going on a similar journey with her aunt Lovell, or her starched friend Miss Budd.

But with all this firmness and independence, her heart was gentle, tender, and kind; and however anomalous it may sound, convinced as the reader must be of her devotion to George Sheringham, the only solace she found in her sorrows on his account, she received in the society of the Count; and herein she only displayed another proof of the admirable regulation of her mind and passions. In every action of her life, she was more familiar with the Count Alexis, than she had ever been with George. Alexis with all his national gallantry would kiss her hand—sit by her side for hours—and yet she felt neither diffidence nor difficulty in the enjoyment of his conversation. She was conscious that her heart was in other keeping, and was perfectly confident that how-

ever much she might admire the *naiveté* and vivacity of her young French friend, she was in no danger of being inspired by a sentiment likely, in the slightest degree, to endanger her sincerity or weaken her constancy.

There *are* people who would act unwisely thus to tamper with their passions and feelings, and amongst the number we should class Lord Weybridge himself; but there was a constitutional firmness and integrity in Emma, which rendered it a matter of impossibility to change or deteriorate the character of an attachment formed, as her's had been for George Sheringham.

At the Hall, the proceedings were very much what Miss Mary Green, in the "viridity of her intellect" described them. The people by whom Harbottle was surrounded had more of fiends than friends about them, and the orgies which had been before in some degree modified by the presence of his lovely wife, were now continued throughout the night, and drunkenness, incessant and unmitigated, reigned throughout the mansion. As for Harbottle himself, he remained sometimes for two or three days together in a state of insensibility, either sullenly

silent, or raving incoherently, indeed the only sign of life or intellect he gave one morning, after about eleven hours sitting, was displayed when two or three of the servants endeavoured to lift him from the floor of the dinner-room to carry him to bed—Raising himself on his arm, upon this memorable occasion, he stammered out, “stand off—stand off, I say, or I’ll lodge an information against you at the Excise Office—I have swallowed more than a dozen of wine—you must not move me without a *permit*.”

This lucid interval was followed by shrieks and shouts most sonorous and inharmonious, and he was lifted into his truckle bed in the little room adjoining the library—for he had never set foot in his own room after Fanny’s departure, nor even gone up the staircase which led towards it—and there he relapsed into the state of unconciousness, in which he slumbered away the greatest part of his now wretched existence.

One effect had been produced upon his character, which threatened to leave him very shortly shorn even of the hangers-on, who literally lived upon him, and for what they could get out of him. His temper which till now

had been variable, and at times boisterous, was formerly enlivened by occasional gleams of bright sunshine, and he was for hours together, good-humoured and gay. Now, all this had turned to moroseness when serious, and ill nature when excited. The coarsest negatives couched in the coarsest language were his ordinary replies to the observations of his boon companions, and his conversation was made up of oaths and imprecations, adopted to give greater force to the expression of his hatred and contempt for every thing on the face of the earth except himself.

Amongst all the objects of his detestation, Hollis had become to him the most odious. He could not endure the sight of him, yet he did not know how to part with him. The consequence was, that the menial, feeling conscious of his master's divided power and inclination became rather his opponent in discussion, than his subordinate in execution, and in short the house, neglected in all its ornamental parts, deserted by every body who could adorn or dignify it, became little else than a rendezvous for all the neighbouring sportsmen without regard either to rank or character. Whether

Harbottle were there or not, in or out, visible or invisible, the same continual routine of jest and ribaldry went on, until at last the Squire became severely ill, and Hollis, in order to rid himself and his fellows of the trouble of waiting on a crowd of their equals, declared his master to be dangerously indisposed, and announced a discontinuance at least for the present of the unlimited licentiousness which had been for many days going on. The combined avowal of the Squire's illness, and the absence of "the meat and drink," answered the purpose effectually, and the next day Binford Hall was as dark and as decent as Mopeham House.

What might have been the imprecations bestowed by the Squire upon the head of Hollis, for the "bulletin" which he had thought proper to issue without authority, had he been well enough to rise the next day, it is impossible to guess. The truth is, that Mr. Harbottle was really and truly too seriously indisposed to quit his bed, and Hollis having administered all the usual remedies upon such occasions, and finding his "poor" master slower in recovering than usual, deemed it necessary to send for Mr. Popjoy to visit the Hall; this measure, he took

about five o'clock in the afternoon, the necessity for which, in his own mind, may be calculated by the fact, that as soon as it was dark, the tilted cart belonging to the establishment was seen leaving the park-gates richly stored with well piled hampers, (whether full or not, it does not become the historian to surmise,) together with divers and sundry other articles "unknown to deponent," all of which were safely deposited in the London waggon the same night, and dispatched at the rate of three miles an hour to the metropolis, directed to the exemplary son of the worthy house-steward and butler, whose departure for town has previously been noticed by Miss Mary Green.

The call upon Popjoy to visit the Squire came very opportunely, for according to the arrangement of the Binford post, it would just give him an opportunity, in his reply to the letter which we happen to know he had received from Lady Frances, to convey to her ladyship some intelligence with respect to his patient's health; and as has been observed in an earlier page, nothing is so delightful to a correspondent from a dull place, as a bit of

something local, which may for a moment excite or interest a friend.

Upon the apothecary's return from the Hall, he therefore concluded his epistle to her ladyship, and his red and white young gentleman having made a proper admixture of camphorated alcohol and aqua pura, according to her ladyship's directions, the bottles were packed and the letter sealed, into which we shall take leave *en passant* to peep.

“ *Binford, Oct. 13, 1830.*

“ MY LADY,

“ I have had the honour to receive your ladyship's letter of the 10th, and have made up three pint bottles of the camphor julep, such I had the pleasure to furnish your ladyship with at Dale Cottage, and hope the same will be found to answer accordingly. I have much to thank your ladyship, for your ladyship's kind recollection of Mrs. P. She begs to be remembered to your ladyship, as does my daughter, to whom we did not venture to exhibit your ladyship's letter, for fear of turning her poor little head.

“ I am sorry to say that I have been sent for

to-day to Mr. Harbottle, who is in a very bad way I fear; he is in a violent fever, and in some degree delirious, the effects of constant intoxication, under which, I am told by the servants, he has been labouring now for two or three days incessantly. I have not ventured to bleed him in his present state of unconsciousness, because I am no advocate for phlebotomy, but I shall see him again this evening, and if he is not better, shall certainly call in Dr. Bogie, who is our nearest physician.

“ Mr. Lovell is pretty well in health. Miss Emma has returned home, and they have a young French nobleman staying with them, Count Alexis Mountenay, who seems a very particular favourite with Miss Lovell and her father. He stops, I hear, until Christmas. He is, however, a great resource to Miss Lovell, whose constant companion he is; for I am sorry to say, since her journey with Mrs. Harbottle, at the time of her elopement, the *ladies* here are not quite so attentive to her as they ought to be.

“ I hope your ladyship will forward me any further commands, and I shall always be too proud to obey them on the instant. Your

servants here are in good health, except the housemaid, Mary Green, who had a smartish bilious attack on the 30th of last month, but which discipline and abstinence soon set to rights.

“ I have the honour, my Lady,
to remain your Ladyship’s
most obedient,
faithful,
humble servant,
“ OLINTHUS POPJOY.”

By the perusal of this letter—how acceptable to Lady Frances who can describe—we are put into possession of several interesting facts relative to the internal economy of Binford—the state of the Squire’s health—and of the popular opinion of the elderly ladies with regard to Emma’s flight—the apothecary’s surmises about the French count—and, above all, the indigestion of Mary Green, on the morning after the day when, like Queen Elizabeth, she had eaten goose, and thought of her sweetheart.

Who can doubt the efficacy of this double-edged sword in the hands of Lady Frances against the suffering martyr, Emma? Not

only the view that Lady Frances had taken of her journey—but the view that all the old ladies took of it—not only the inuendo of a French count—but the actual fact of his residence at the Parsonage, and his name—Alexis Montenay—and all this, and the bulletin from the Hall, for the value of a little condescension, and three pints of camphor julep.

The effects of this communication remain to be exhibited in the sequel; suffice it to say, that the letter, carefully sealed and delicately deposited in the packing-case, in company with the three bottles, quitted Binford at eight o'clock in the evening, and at half-past eight the gentl eapothecary again proceeded to the Squire's bed side, where he seated himself, and remained unnoticed by his much-damaged patient, until ten minutes past nine; when, opening his eyes, the sick man swore a tremendous oath at the village Galen, and having thrown one of the pillows at his head, turned himself round again to sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

“My bane and antidote are both before me.”

ADDISON.

“EXACTLY the reverse, my lady,” said MacGopus, who had arrived at Severnstoke just in time for dinner, and was now sitting after it, in the yellow drawing-room, debating a question with the Duchess and her daughter; Lord Weybridge being occupied in a distant corner writing letters.

“Surely, my dear sir,” said the Duchess, “you must agree with Katharine that equal matches are more likely to produce happiness than those in which there exists a great disparity of rank and fortune between the husband and wife.”

“Quite the contrary, my lady,” replied the Doctor. “If a rich man marries a poor woman, she feels grateful as well as affectionate, and *vice versa*.”

“Well now,” said Lady Katharine—who being extremely amused by the quaintness and oddity of the Doctor’s manner, determined to have her full share of the conversation—“when we were at St. Leonard’s, last year—”

“Stop, my lady,” interrupted MacGopus—“where’s St. Leonard’s?”

“Oh, the sea watering-place, close to Hastings,” said her ladyship. “When—”

“Stay now—I beg pardon—” said the Doctor, “that must be near the spot where William the Conqueror landed.”

“Exactly. Well, when we were at St. Leonard’s last season?”

“Was it full, my lady, when you were there?” asked MacGopus.

Lady Katharine, unused to such strange interruptions, stopped for an instant—and then looked at her mother.

“Why don’t you answer, Katharine?” said her Grace.

“Oh,” cried Lord Weybridge, from his

corner, "Lady Katharine is not used to my old doctor yet. You won't get him out of St. Leonard's this side midnight, if you indulge him."

"Mind your letter, my Lord," said Mac Gopus. "Leave her ladyship alone. Well, my Lady—"

"Upon my word I have entirely forgotten what I was going to say," said her ladyship.

"Something illustrative of the question concerning unequal marriages," said the Doctor, "which was to refute my decision."

What the anecdote illustrative of the question concerning unequal marriages might have been, the assembled party were not at that period destined to hear; for Lady Frances, who had quitted the room a short time before, on a summons brought to her by a servant, returned full of exulting smiles, and, with an expression of triumph on her countenance, threw the newly-received letter of Popjoy (in the reading of which we have taken the liberty of anticipating her) upon the table before George, with an air of decision and self-gratulation, which it would be vain to attempt to describe.

George ran his eyes along the lines, and Lady

Frances watched the expression of his countenance as they followed the words of the Binford apothecary. A smile played on his lips at one moment, and then he paused :—" I am sorry to hear of Harbottle's illness ;" said his Lordship, " it is a result which one might have anticipated. He might probably have been saved, if your communicative correspondent had been able to bleed him at the moment."

" Well—read on," said Lady Frances.

Lord Weybridge obeyed. He came to the paragraph about the Lovells — his colour changed—his lip quivered—symptoms which would have been most unpleasant to her ladyship, had she not felt assured that the intelligence which followed would cure the disorder altogether. George concluded so much of the epistle as concerned the family ; and, throwing it upon the table with an air of indifference and firmness, said—" What a scandalous place a country town is. I think these old women, affecting to look shy upon a girl for conduct sanctioned by her father, and that father such a man as Lovell, is rather too much of a joke."

" What do you think of the history of the Count ?" said Lady Frances.

“ Why, that he is some old friend of Lovell’s on a visit at the Parsonage, to whom Emma, in the plenitude of her good nature and good breeding, thinks it right to be extremely civil.”

“ Surely,” said Lady Frances, “ my dear George, you have not read the letter attentively. The words are, ‘ young French nobleman.’ ”

“ Aye, aye,” said Lord Weybridge, who was determined not to be annoyed—“ but estimates of age are always comparative. Popjoy, at sixty, fancies any thing at fifty juvenile. just as a veteran of eighty, laments the untimely death of his friend at ninety-two, as an awful and unseasonable visitation. Duchess, do you, amongst the cloud of foreigners who migrate hither in the season like herrings and woodcocks, know any thing of a Count——what do you call him, Lady Frances ?”

“ Alexis Montenay,” said or rather read her ladyship.

“ Montenay ?” said her Grace—“ No. What was that man’s name with the mustachios we met at the Howards, Katharine ?”

“ I quite forget,” said Lady Katharine, “ but

certainly not Montenay ; and yet I *do* think I have heard the name. If you are very much interested, Lord Weybridge, I will write to-morrow to Lady Winterbourne, who has a list of the arrivals regularly furnished from the Foreign Office, and keeps a register of their names during the season."

" Oh, I don't think" said Lady Frances, " George cares much about it."

" I think he does," said MacGopus, taking a pinch of snuff, and looking excessively cunning ; for doing which Lady Frances could have killed him.

" Where did you hear of this ' outlandish person ?' " said Lady Katharine.

" From Binford," replied Lady Frances.

" What's Binford, my Lady ?" said MacGopus.

" Don't answer him, my dear mother," said Lord Weybridge. " He knows as well as you do. I have told him at least a hundred times, and it is all affectation. He has heard that the majority of clever people in the world are short-sighted, and so he fancies that a short memory is a proof of great wit.

" I only asked what Binford was," said

MacGopus, neither disturbed by his noble friends raillery, or diverted from his purpose.

“Why,” said Lady Katharine, “it is the place where Lady Frances lives, when she is at home.”

“Ah!” said MacGopus, “that’s the place where the Parson lives who has the daughter.”

“Have you ever seen the Parson’s daughter?” said the Duchess.

“No, ma’am,” replied MacGopus; “but I have heard a great deal about her.”

“I think you will not hear much more,” said Lady Frances, who looked at the Doctor as if she could have eaten him alive.

“I really don’t see,” said Lord Weybridge, “why Miss Lovell is to be an interdicted subject. She has shown her independence by accompanying a lady in her flight from a husband, and is now exercising her taste by flirting with a young French nobleman; whereupon the elderly ladies of Binford, to whose taste and judgment my dear mother was not always in the habit of deferring when they were her neighbours, think it prudent and wise to look cool upon her.”

“And with good reason, too,” said MacGo-

pus ; “ why did she go scampering over the country with a runaway ? ”

“ Ah ! why indeed ; ” said Lady Frances, who was convinced she had got the Doctor in the right key to serve her purpose—“ what excuse can be made for that ? ”

“ Friendship, my lady,” replied MacGopus, “ which is an excuse for many things. She has got a father, has’nt she ? ”

“ She has,” said George ; arousing himself to make the answer, from a reverie, the appearance of which, was any thing but agreeable to his lady mother.

“ Well then, surely,” said MacGopus, “ if he—a good man—and a prudent man—and a wise man—permitted his child to make the excursion, there can’t be much harm in it.”

Here Lady Frances, who was dying to change the conversation which she had herself somewhat incautiously started, proposed music, *écarté*, chess, and fifty minor diversions, and Lady Katharine good-naturedly seated herself at the pianoforte, and played some of the last new quadrilles ; but George, instead of following her to the instrument, as usual, took MacGopus aside, and muttered to him

in one of the windows of the next drawing-room ; and Lady Frances went and sat by the Duchess, to endeavour to talk down the unfortunate allusion which had been made to Emma, during which conversation, Lady Katharine blundered over Auber, unconscious of what she was about, and full of the belief that she was not so near the heart or coronet of their noble host as she had, during the last week, fancied herself.

It was just at this period—perhaps at the very moment of which we are now treating—that the two mothers began to take counsel, and agree that the crisis had arrived—that the particular turn in the affair upon which both their hearts were fixed was at hand—and that it became a duty on the part of the Duchess to come to some explanation with Lord Weybridge on the subject of his intentions towards her daughter. This feeling on the part of her Grace, Lady Frances endeavoured by every means in her power to strengthen. She was assured, by her son's manner, that his interest in Emma Lovell was in no degree decreased ; but she was equally convinced, judging by the same criterion, that his faith in her was shaken—Her

conduct subsequent to the very unsatisfactory letter of her father, in which he had evidently condescended to equivocate, was any thing but gratifying: and now this account of her new attachment, or flirtation, or whatever it was, coupled with the description of the impression which her imprudence had made in the immediate neighbourhood, her ladyship was perfectly convinced would prove a powerful blow to his personal vanity, or perhaps as it might be considered, to his pride and delicacy.

Feeling conscious, as he did, that he had, in fact, and to all intents and purposes, made Emma an offer of his heart and hand through the medium of her friend—who, under all the circumstances, could neither have concealed nor misrepresented the fact—he certainly was staggered by the intelligence which his mother had received. Matter of opinion would have had little or no effect upon him; because he felt himself competent, upon an explanation of all that had occurred since his departure from Binford, to make up his own mind, and come to a decision upon Emma's conduct: but matter of fact he could not combat.

He certainly could not have expected any

communication from Miss Lovell herself. He was not so certain as to the impracticability of Mrs. Harbottle's writing to him to announce the fulfilment of her engagement to plead his cause with her friend. There was no reason, considering the terms upon which they had been living, and considering the nature of the mission she had undertaken, why she should not have done so ; and yet, on the other hand, the sudden separation from her husband having taken place since she had seen Lord Weybridge, a difficulty and delicacy, either as to observing a total silence upon that point, or making any reference to it, might have restrained her from opening any thing like a correspondence with an unmarried man, whom she had known only under her husband's roof as his friend and acquaintance. Her silence, however mortifying, he could therefore account for ; but he could not account for the display made by Emma of a new acquaintance domesticated at the Parsonage-house, so immediately upon her return from the society of the friend to whose care the suit of her once evidently-favoured suitor had been entrusted.

These things were passing in his mind, and

more than once during the evening he recurred to the name of Montenay, with an interest and anxiety not to be mistaken. This night, therefore, Lady Frances resolved to press upon him the necessity of making some declaration with respect to Lady Katharine, and to tell him, *in confidence*, that by so doing in the morning, he would only anticipate a conversation upon the subject, which the Duchess felt it her duty to have with him the next day; and that by thus forerunning her Grace's intentions, he would secure to himself the credit of a voluntary declaration, rather than the stigma of a forced explanation of his intentions.

Lady Katharine retired to rest early. She had—at least she said so—a head-ache, and she looked languid and pathetic, and her affectionate mother thought sleep, if she could get any, would do her good; and her ladyship quitted the drawing-room evidently out of spirits, and not without a somewhat reproachful glance at Lord Weybridge, who had never gone near her, or even spoken to her, since the perusal of his lady-mother's apothecary's letter.

Far be it from me even to surmise that the

Duchess and Lady Frances had entered into any preconcerted arrangement for the purpose of leaving the family trio—for the Doctor, so far as its politics went, might fairly be considered one of the family—to a consultation upon matters of importance—but certain it is, that her Grace was not long in following the example of retiring, which her daughter had set her, at least an hour and half before her accustomed hour. The Duchess departed, with a significant nod to Lady Frances, given with an expression of countenance which seemed to say—"I wish you would settle it to-night, it will save us a world of difficulty and embarrassment;" nor did her Grace omit to take leave, in the most friendly way, of the Doctor, whose opinion she felt would have great weight in the cabinet; nor to wish Lord Weybridge good night, with one of her sweetest smiles, and a pressure of the hand, which he felt at the moment was ominously maternal.

"Strangers having withdrawn," George, who knew—and, a certain degree, habitually participated in—his excellent friend's partiality for one glass of grog at least, before turning in, and who was ordinarily supported in the pursuit by

Lady Frances's already mentioned bottle of soda-water, ordered all the essentials for such enjoyments, which, to the unaccustomed servants—who, till the Doctor's arrival, had not been in the habit of serving refreshments so purely nautical—seemed “passing strange;” being much encouraged therein by his noble mother, who wished to make what the Scotch courts call a “sederunt,” in order at once to conclude the matter, which she considered of such vital importance to her own happiness, and her son's respectability.

“Now George,” said her ladyship, “now that we are here—three—yourself—your mother—and your faithful and favourite friend—what season can be better for the discussion of a topic which must inevitably be forced upon you to-morrow?”

“What topic may that be?” said Lord Weybridge.

“—Why,” said her ladyship, “I will be candid—and I throw myself entirely upon Dr. MacGopus's judgment, to decide whether I am right or wrong. The fact is, that your attentions to Lady Katharine Hargrave have become so marked and so pointed, and her reception of

them so decidedly favourable, that you are bound to take some decisive step immediately with regard to her. Remember now, I tell you that in what I am saying as your mother this evening, I believe myself only to be anticipating what *her* mother will say to you to-morrow."

"My dear madam," said George, "I am not conscious that my attentions have been particular—I—admit—I think that Lady Katharine is extremely agreeable, and handsome, and all that, and—"

"—— and you have taught her to believe in your good opinion, George," said her ladyship—"the effect that conviction has had upon her is evident—to night—did you ever see such an alteration in her manner, in her appearance, even in her countenance when she saw the interest you took about that French lover of the little dowdy Parson's daughter."

"Umph," said MacGopus—"that goes for nothing—the ice the young woman ate after dinner disagreed with her.—I knew she would be ill in the evening—that was all stomach—nothing to do with heart."

"Heart or not," said Lord Weybridge—"I

certainly should be extremely sorry that any conduct of mine should have led either Katharine or her mother to anticipate a proposal on my part, which I certainly had not three weeks since the slightest idea of making. I confess candidly to you both, that if I could believe the history of Miss Lovell's frivolity."——

"Stay, George, stay, my lord," said MacGopus,—“who's Miss Lovell?”—

"Psha," said Lord Weybridge — “don't worry me to death.”

"How should *I* know," said MacGopus.

"Why, because you have been told a thousand times," said Lord Weybridge,—“I say *if* I could believe first in the indelicacy of Miss Lovell's conduct with regard to Mrs. Harbottle.—”

“—Upon which,” interrupted Lady Frances, “you never can possibly form a judgement, till you know Mrs. Harbottle's motives for eloping from her husband.”

“And which motives,” said Lord Weybridge, “from all I have heard from a friend of mine, I honestly admit I most seriously suspect.”

“Well then why doubt?” said his mother.

“Because it is impossible not to doubt.”

“Then you do doubt,” said MacGopus,
“and isn’t that enough.—”

“What damned minutes counts he o’er,
Who doats, yet doubts, suspects, yet fondly loves.”

“That’s what I say, Doctor,” said her ladyship, much encouraged by MacGopus’s advocacy, “Cæsar’s wife should not be suspected.”

“I don’t see how that applies, my lady,” said MacGopus,—“Lord Weybridge is never likely to be a Cæsar, and he has no wife.”

“I mean sir,” said her ladyship, rather angry, “that a doubt of that young woman’s propriety ought to satisfy him.”

“Quite the contrary my lady,” replied the Doctor, “nobody can be satisfied with a doubt, because if you are satisfied no doubt remains.”

“Don’t quarrel about terms or play upon words,” said Lord Weybridge, “I agree with my mother, that the conduct of Miss Lovell is very strange, and I should say, if I had not a very high opinion of her character and disposition, that she seems to have been playing a reckless game, that from some unaccountable motive she had plunged into a new sphere of action, and rather gloried in her singularity.”

“Is she handsome?” said the Doctor, sipping a glass of mahogany-coloured brandy and water, such as he was wont to make and circulate in the ward room of the Elephant.

“I have told you a hundred times,—beautiful,” said his lordship.

“Beautiful! my dear child,” said Lady Frances; “I’ll tell you Doctor, she has very handsome blue eyes, well formed features, a fair complexion, light hair, and a very pretty figure.”

“Umph!” said MacGopus, his huge black eyes rolling about in their orbits; “I don’t consider that ugly—and they call her Emma?”

“Oh! you know that,” said Lord Weybridge, impatiently.

“Well, and you see Doctor MacGopus,” said Lady Frances, “here is this young woman without family, fortune, connexion, or as it seems conduct, on the one hand, who, if George really ever had any penchant for her while domesticated in that odious place, has set him at defiance and evidently made her choice; for, of course, her father even if he were fool enough to allow her to be the companion of a married

runaway would not permit the constant attentions of a young man of rank like this Count ——?"

"——Montenay," said Lord Weybridge.

"Montenay—to be received," continued her ladyship, "without a certainty of some serious and permanent result—there can be no question about *that*."

"I own your arguments are extremely plausible," said Lord Weybridge; "but, I have confessed to you, and to this old scarecrow over and over again, a devotion to this misrepresented excellent creature."

"To me!" said the Doctor, "you never did—you made confidences about the Bibi Saab at Calcutta, and the wine man's black-eyed daughter at the Cape, and the beautiful blue-eyed yam-stock at St. Helena; but you never confided any thing to me about this Miss—whatever her name is—tut man—look at Lady Katharine—there *is* a lovely young body—blood, beauty, rank, and accomplishment!"

"Psha!" said George, half wavering.

"You are right Doctor MacGopus," said Lady Frances, "Lady Katharine would make an admirable wife for him."

"I'm not so sure o' that, my lady," said the

Doctor, "those fine shewy creatures about in the world don't always settle down like the quiet ones."

"No to be sure," interrupted George, "the quiet ones for me."

"Why so," said MacGopus, "the quiet ones abroad are the noisiest at home—a tall woman and proud, and a little woman and loud, is the proverb in my country."

"Then whom do you agree with?" said Lady Frances.

"Not with your ladyship," said the Doctor.

"Nor with me," said George.

"Certainly not," replied MacGopus.

"Then you agree with neither of us," said Lady Frances.

"On the contrary, with both of you," answered the Doctor.

"Illustrious humbug," said George: "I shall go to bed—I am sick of this unprofitable discussion about nothing."

"Excuse me, Lord Weybridge," said MacGopus, "it is about a great deal—it is about whether you are to sacrifice your honour and propriety, and all your future prospects to a visionary scheme of happiness with an obscure

hugger-mugger Parson's daughter, who has been scampering all over the country with a profligate woman, and comes home to her father's manse, or whatever you call the thing here with a French dandy count, whose very name makes me sick."

"What have *you* deserted me," said Lord Weybridge.

"No—I am adhering to you and to your interests," said MacGopus, who grew eloquent in proportion to the quantity he swallowed of that liquor which derived its name for the "admirable Vernon."—"I am sure this young lady is attached to you—Lady Frances says you have made her believe you are attached to her—fie man—where are your manners, you have lost them all by grubbing ashore so long."

To Lady Frances this familiarity which was quite unaccountable, and would at any other time have been vastly irritating, was quite charming—the rough grating of the Doctor's rebuke so unlike the soft melodious tone in which he had been addressing the "ladies" during the earlier part of the evening, sounded like music to her ears, and she sat silent partly from amazement, and partly because she found that

if she ventured to agree with her eccentric co-adjutor, he would instantly convert himself into her most violent antagonist.

“What have I done,” said George, “to commit myself, as you call it, to Katharine. I tell you now as I told you before, I think her an extremely delightful person, I enjoy her society—I love to hear her sing, or speak, for the one she does sweetly, and the other agreeably; but I am not conscious of having paid her more attention than is inevitable in a country house, more especially if that country house happens to be one’s own.”

“The Duchess feels it differently,” said Lady Frances.

“Let me drink—drink and forget all this,” said Lord Weybridge; “let me forget Emma Lovell and the infernal French Count. Come MacGopus make me one of those tremendous north westers, that even when I was a youngster you prescribed for me in the Elephant.—I could have overlooked all the elopement story—but that infernal revolutionary——”

“—Ay de mi,” said the Doctor, “what a whirligig your head is—so now because the poor body has taken a walk with one of the French

“noblesse,” you are to cast her off—and—well, well—here drown your sorrows.”

“Sorrows he ought to have none to drown,” said Lady Frances.

“No,” said MacGopus, taking an extra pinch, “all his sorrows were drowned, four months ago, in the Mediterranean.”

Lady Frances was shocked at this unfeeling allusion.

“To be sure,” said the Doctor, glancing off entirely from the point to which she was endeavouring to keep her son, “that must have been a most lubberly business; but, no matter—the Royal Yacht Club in the Mediterranean—a cat in—”

“Come, come,” said Lord Weybridge, “still your satire most excellent Caliban; I wish I knew what I have done to deserve being called to account about Lady Katharine Hargrave.”

“Nothing, dear George,” said Lady Frances, “nothing; only followed the dictates of judgment and good taste. You saw and admired he—constant association has confirmed your first impression, and she is destined to make you happy.”

“Me happy!” said Lord Weybridge, upon

whose unaccustomed head the potential mixture of his nautical Mentor began to take considerable effect : “ Me ! —why, my dear mother, you fancy every woman who sees me is in love with me, I believe. Suppose—suppose, I say, at this very moment—oh ! that French monster, how I hate the recollection. Well—well—it is all her own fault—, I say if at this very moment, I were to propose to Lady Katharine, I would stake my existence she would refuse me.”

“ Commission me, George, to make the experiment,” said Lady Frances, “ this very night—for the Duchess is not gone to bed—this very hour I will satisfy you on that point. Come, George.”

“ Do, George,” said the Doctor, because he was convinced he would not.

“ I will do what is right,” said Lord Weybridge, worked up into a state of excitement very nearly bordering on delirium ; “ you may tell the Duchess, if you like, that I admire her daughter, and that if she thinks I have evinced more attention towards her than a man without intentions has a right to do—I—I—shall be delighted to marry her.”

“ You commission me to say this,” said Lady Frances, “ and permit me to put it in my own way—softening down the expressions, and modifying the language.”

“ Anything for a quiet life,” said Lord Weybridge, who was at the moment in a state to require quiet more than any thing else.

“ Now recollect, George,” said Lady Frances, “ before I go, the commission is a serious one—it decides your fate—”

“ I consider my fate decided already,” said George; “ I have been duped—deceived—cheated and despised; there are no such things as innocence and virtue, and sincerity in the world.”

“ Very little, indeed,” said the Doctor.

“ I tell you honestly,” continued George, “ I am careless and reckless; I believe marriage the best chance of happiness—not the happiness I once hoped for, but—there—there,” said he, starting up, “ do what you please—there’s a *carte blanche*.”

“ And a Dame Blanche into the bargain,” said the Doctor; “ go to bed, my lord—go to bed; take my advice, and think of this again in the morning.”

“There can be no occasion for that,” said Lady Frances; “the management of the affair is now in my hands—isn’t it, my dear George?”

“E’en as you please,” said Lord Weybridge, scarcely knowing what he said, and not considerably indebted to his nautical friend for any thing like an explanation.

“Then I’ll leave you to finish your evening,” said Lady Frances. “Good night! Heaven bless you, dear George:” here she kissed his cheek, “Good night, Doctor—to-morrow we will resume the subject.”

“I’ll talk it over with you all day, my lady,” said MacGopus, not trusting himself sufficiently to rise entirely from his seat; “Good night!”

And so departed Lady Frances, and straightway proceeded to the Duchess’s dressing-room, where she found Lady Katharine so much recovered as to have got up to drink some tea, which she fancied she should like, and the Duchess herself sipping the same beverage, just *pour passer le temps*. In this little committee all that had occurred below stairs was

detailed by her ladyship. with such additions and new colourings as she thought might make it more amiable and acceptable to Lady Katharine, who bore the announcement of Lord Weybridge's intentions with as much philosophy as "strong affection" could exhibit. After which Lady Frances took leave of her Grace and her future daughter-in-law, in the best possible spirits at having attained her object; and brought matters to a point from which it appeared impossible for her son now to recede.

"Why, what a tom-noddy you have made of yourself," said MacGopus to his noble friend, after Lady Frances had left the yellow drawing-room, "that is, if you care for the Parson's daughter."

"What do you mean?" said George.

"Mean? why you have made an offer to Lady Katharine—you are aware of that, I suppose?"

"Not exactly an offer?"

"Yes, exactly an offer—you have said you'll marry her. I should be sorry to trust myself to say so much to any woman in the world, if I didn't mean her to accept me."

“ Well done, Venerable Vanity,” said Lord Weybridge ; “ I am distracted—I dare say I have talked nonsense ; but why should I not marry her ?”

“ I’m sure I don’t know,” said the Doctor, “ only you told me that you were devoted—as you called it—to this unsophisticated creature at that place—the Parson’s daughter—and in two hours after, you commission your mother to negotiate a marriage in another quarter.”

“ Stuff,” said Lord Weybridge, “ she will negotiate no marriage—it will all end in talk.”

“ Not a bit of it,” said the Doctor.

“ *Nous verrons*,” said his Lordship ; “ I would give the world to see this Count Montenay.”

“ It’s all too late, I tell you,” said MacGopus, “ your fate is settled—so Count or no Count—true or false—all’s one to you, my lord ; come, let us to bed ; you’ll have a head-ache in the morning.”

“ A heart-ache, perhaps,” said Lord Weybridge.

“ That’s your affair,” replied the Doctor, “ we shall see, as you say.”

“ But if you thought I was committing my-

self," said Lord Weybridge, "why did not you stop me—check me?"

"What have I to do with it?" said Mac-Gopus, "I'm only a passenger. You told *me* one story, and I believed you; you told your mother another, and *she* believed you. She has a stronger claim upon you than I have, so I suppose you told *her* the truth. What had I to do with it? As for Lady Katharine, if what you told me be true, I would rather marry the Parson's daughter with a penny portion, than I would tie myself to this one with a million."

"Then why the devil did not you say so!"

"If I had said so you would have contradicted me, and I hate contradiction."

"You are a most unaccountable animal, to be sure."

"Come, my lord, to bed—to bed," said the Doctor, "to-morrow may bring us something new; but if you have not the whole bevy of beauties, Dowager, Duchess, daughter and all on your hands, before twelve o'clock, I'm a Dutchman."

"And whatever misery happens to me in consequence——"

“—Say it was *me*, my lord,” said the Doctor, “good night—you’ll be better after a sleep. Don’t be angry with me—I dare say it will all come right in the end ; so—say good night.”

“Well then, good night,” said Lord Weybridge—and so they parted.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Had you a friend so desperately sick—
That all physicians had forsook his cure,
All scorched without and all parch'd up within ;
The moisture that maintained consuming Nature
Licked up, and in a fever fryed away :
Could you behold him beg with dying eyes
A glass of water, and refuse it him
Because you knew it ill for his disease ?
When he would die without it.—How could you
Deny to make his death more easy to him ?”

DRYDEN.

WHEN, after a feverish sleep, disturbed and interrupted by wild and uncomfortable dreams, Lord Weybridge awoke in the morning, his feelings were anything but calm, or satisfactory—his recollections were unpleasant—his anticipations distressing.—It was clear that under an irritation caused by the unequivocal description

of Emma's inconstancy in the Binford letter, and the united and separate persuasions, irony, entreaty, and ridicule of his mother and his friend, he had empowered the former to pledge him to the Duchess with respect to her daughter.

As soon as he had partly dressed—his lordship dispatched his man to MacGopus's room to beg him to come to him directly. The Doctor, who had previously taken an hour's "quarter-deck walk" on the terrace, obeyed the summons, and Lord Weybridge dismissed his valet.

"Doctor," said George, "I believe I have made myself the most unhappy man in the the King's dominions—in a fit of spleen, much aggravated by your infernal sneers, I have permitted myself to abandon the only woman in the world I ever cared for, and pledge myself to one, for whom, now the hour is come, I am sure I care nothing."

"The hour isn't come," said MacGopus—"it is gone. Your mother and the Duchess have been walking in the flower-garden for the last hour and a half."

"What made them so early?" said his lordship.

“ They are not early,” said the Doctor,
“ What made *you* so late ?”

“ Head-ache and fever—all owing to that odious brandy-and-water.”

“ Brandy-and-water, in moderation, is a very wholesome thing,” said MacGopus—“ I think I am a strong instance of its salubrity.”

“ What am I to do ?” said his lordship, “ of course the conversation must take place after breakfast—am I really committed ?”

“ Nailed like a bat on a barn-door,” said the Doctor.

“ Then I am ruined !”——

“ Psha ! What’s the matter ?—isn’t the young lady noble, and handsome, and accomplished ?”——

“ —— Hang her accomplishments,” said George, “ to think I should have been provoked into such silly—such wicked conduct—pledged as I am to Emma.”

“ A man should never pledge himself,” said MacGopus, “ except at an election, and there it does not signify. Hustings pledges go for nothing ”——

“ —— And as for this French Count,” continued his lordship, “ Why should I be jealous of a French Count ?”——

“ I dont know, I'm sure,” said MacGopus, “ I should think running against an English Baron, he can't have much chance.”

“ Why did not you say *that* last night ?” said Lord Weybridge.

“ It didn't occur to me,” replied the Doctor—“ at present I tell you that's past—you have authorized your mother to open the preliminaries with the Duchess, and she has lost no time in doing so. You are as fast in the noose as if you had just returned from church.”

“ By Heavens,” said George, “ I shall not be able to endure their looks, their words, their remarks at breakfast.”

“ Lady Katharine won't come down,” said MacGopus.

“ How may you know that ?”

“ The Duchess” said the Doctor, “ asked me to give her some advice about her headaches, and fever, and I recommended her lying in bed.”

“ In that I *do* thank you,” said Lord Weybridge.

“ So, therefore, I would advise you to prepare for breakfast as fast as you can, and come to your reflections afterwards.”

Saying which, the uncommunicative Doctor retired, and Lord Weybridge began the completion of his toilet.

We have read in an account of an execution, how the culprit bore up with surprising presence of mind, and how his firmness never forsook him even when the attendants came to pinion his arms, nor even while the great finisher of the law fastened the fatal noose round his neck. The fortitude of such unhappy sufferers was emulated by his lordship during his preparations for the breakfast-room. He felt the noose already fastened, and having been self-condemned, had not even the distant gleaming hope of a reprieve before his eyes—all his thoughts dwelt upon procrastination and delay, and as he was quite certain that nothing could be said during breakfast itself, surrounded as they should be by servants, he resolved upon making a dash at the outset, and endeavour, if possible, to evade any thing like a *tête-a-tête* with any body during the rest of the day; in order to achieve which object, he resolved never to part with MacGopus until dressing time for dinner—but the delay was childish—it was like smelling to a bitter draught which was sure to

be administered, and which he had himself proposed to swallow.

The remorse which his precipitancy on the previous night caused him, was deeper than either his friend or his mother, or certainly Lady Katharine could have imagined and he only relieved himself from the poignancy of his feelings by anathematizing the Doctor in terms the least gentle that can well be imagined.

At breakfast, the gracious and complacent smile of the Duchess, which played over a countenance expressive of a deep and intimate interest in all his lordship's proceeding, was worse to him than the grin of a Gorgon. He saw precisely all that was passing in her mind, and he watched the interchange of looks between her grace and his mother, and it was with difficulty he restrained himself from bursting into an exclamation, at once renouncing all his promises and permissions of the preceding evening, concluding the display of his feelings by rushing out of the room, throwing himself into his travelling carriage, and starting for a tour.

The sinking sailor sometimes finds a plank—the engulphed miner hears the sound of help at hand—the benighted wanderer sees some friendly light to save him from perdition. Little did

Lord Weybridge, when he sat down to breakfast, anticipate what would occur before he had concluded it, which not only should rescue him from the jeopardy in which he felt himself, but carry him, as fast as horses' feet could move, to the very spot of all others to which he was most anxious to go.

Scarcely had he finished his coffee, when his own man entered the breakfast-room, pale with alarm, and breathless with haste, bearing in his hand a letter, which he whispered his Lord had that moment arrived by express. It came from Binford.

"Binford!" exclaimed Lady Frances; "what! is my cottage burnt down?"

"No," said Lord Weybridge; "hear this: and he read as follows:—

"Binford Hall, four o'clock, A.M.

"MY LORD,

"At the desire of Mr. Harbottle, who, I regret to say, lies without hope of recovery, I write these few lines, to request—to entreat and implore are his own words—that your lordship will not lose a moment, if it be possible, in coming to him. From myself I may add, that

a few hours may render your journey needless. He has some most important communication to make to *you*, to whom, of all persons in the world, he says it ought for many reasons to be made. His fever and delirium are violent; and although I have little hope of his recovery, I have no hesitation in saying, that the gratification of his desire to see your Lordship would, more than any thing, I believe, tend to compose his mind, and reduce the irritation under which he labours. Let me venture to entreat your immediate compliance with what I almost fear you may consider his dying wish.

“ I remain, my Lord,

“ Your Lordship's obedient servant,

“ W. GROVER.”

“ From Doctor Grover is the letter?” said Lady Frances. “ Well, now, what a shocking thing, George. What will you do, dear?”

“ Go this instant;” said Lord Weybridge.

“ Go!” said her ladyship.

“ Go!” exclaimed the Duchess.

“ To be sure, go,” said the Doctor.

“ What earthly use is your going?” said Lady Frances. “ What was or is Mr. Har-

bottle to you, or you to him, that he should send express to see *you*, of all the people in the world?"

"My dear mother," said Lord Weybridge, "your eloquence will all be vainly exerted upon this occasion. I have eaten of his bread, I have drank of his wine; his house has sheltered me, and his welcome has greeted me; he is ill—perhaps dying. His last desire is to see me; shall I refuse him?"

"But such a man!" said Lady Frances.

"Exactly such a man, my dear mother," said Lord Weybridge, "as you found it convenient or agreeable to visit; and who, although rude in manner, was kind after his nature."

"Yes, like a bear," said her ladyship, who saw in this unexpected expedition a most dangerous impediment to her manœuvrings.

"Well, like a bear if you please," said George; "but if ladies admire bears, they must abide by their taste. I repeat to you, he has been kind to me—I now may be of use to him; and if not on his death-bed, as the physician thinks it, he begs to see me—I go—Here," continued his Lordship—"order four horses to the chariot directly; and you, my

gentle Mac, will be my companion on the journey."

"Dear, dear," said the Duchess, "what a very extraordinary circumstance."

"Most extraordinary," said Lady Frances, "to send for George, whose only attraction to his house, as I believe, was his pretty wife."

"It is to prove that Mrs. Harbottle was *not* my only attraction," said Lord Weybridge, "that I am going to the house where she is not."

"Oh, I dare say they have made it all up again," said her ladyship, "and this is some trick of hers to get you there."

"I think," said Lord Weybridge, "Mrs. Harbottle is too well aware of my feelings upon such matters to fancy me into her cicisbeo. Come, Doctor, bestir yourself—my *fidus Achates*—come."

"Are you really going?" said the Doctor.

"Why to be sure I am; have I not said it—have I not ordered horses—come—come—"

"Of course you will not stay," said Lady Frances.

"*Cela depend*," replied his lordship, "I shall stay to fulfil whatever duty I may consider

it right to perform. I shall venture to establish myself at the cottage, with your ladyship's permission, and shall moreover introduce the Doctor to your snugery, in the full and perfect confidence of his finding fault with every part of it."

Lady Frances, of course smiled agreeably, and looked quite charmed at the idea, but her heart ached, as any body might have known who knew her countenance, because in a moment she saw all that would follow. Harbottle might have lived for ages or died the week before, and it would have been a matter of perfect indifference to her; but she anticipated the meeting which must infallibly take place between the Lovells and her son—she dreaded the effect of the interview—she feared the plausibility with which the Parson's daughter might explain *her* acquaintance with the Frenchman, and, perhaps, completely exonerate herself from any thing like impropriety in the journey with Mrs. Harbottle; in short, if that terrible personage who is said to make his appearance immediately after being talked of, had arrived at Severnstoke, instead of the messenger from the sick Squire, he could scarcely

have been less welcome, or have created more dismay.

“Mind my dear George—now do take care,” said her ladyship, “if you *do* go to the cottage pray see that your beds are well aired.”

“That’s of no consequence,” said the Doctor, “the prejudice against the danger of lying in damp sheets—except, indeed, to a printer—is all a vulgar error.”

“My dear sir !” said her ladyship,

“Come MacGopus,” said Lord Weybridge, “let us have no discussions—I have a duty to perform, and the rapidity with which I perform it constitutes part of the duty itself. I shall return as soon as possible—and the sooner I go, in all probability, the sooner I shall be home again; meanwhile, my dear Duchess, make yourselves as happy as you can—there are two or three people, I believe, expected to-day and to-morrow, and to you my dear mother I trust their reception, with all due ardour and hospitality—and now come along.”

“Not one word for poor Katharine,” said the Duchess, “who will sincerely lament missing you—I know.”

“Oh !” said Lord Weybridge, “present my

kindest regards and remembrances—we shall, however, meet again so soon—and I hate the formalities of leave-taking—come, come, let us prepare ourselves.”

Saying which, he literally turned MacGopus out of the breakfast-room, and pushing every preparation with the greatest rapidity, was in a short time waiting for nothing but his servant and the carriage.”

There remained two manœuvres to be performed, for which there was just sufficient time—as soon as George had quitted the breakfast parlour, the Duchess hurried to Lady Katharine's room—she found her in her dressing-room, having breakfasted ; two small plates entirely empty—two egg-cups quite vacant, and only half a well-sized loaf remaining on the table, indicating that her ladyship's appetite had not suffered—herself dressed for the morning—her the Duchess hurried down stairs, to take leave of George by surprise just as he should be stepping into the carriage—this was the manœuvre of the Duchess.

Two minutes before his lordship's foot was on the steps, Robert, Lady Frances's footman made his appearance, evidently labouring under some embarrassment of a serious cha-

racter—he suggested, that as my lord would go to Dale Cottage, his presence might perhaps be more useful as being better acquainted with the *locale* than any of his lordship's footmen, and that, perhaps her ladyship, if Mr. Roberts had no objection, would allow him to go in the rumble and—

“To be sure,” said Lady Frances, “tell Roberts, that I think, if his lord likes it you had better go—to be sure—very thoughtful indeed, Robert.”

Wide apart were the spheres in which moved the Duchess and the footman—but the influence of passion and policy was pretty equal in either. The Duchess roused her noble daughter, and Robert affected an interest in Lord Weybridge, the one to carry the point of producing an interview, between his lordship and Lady Katharine, and the other to secure himself the pleasure of an interview, and a brief association with Mary Green!!

One might stop to moralize upon these graduated trickeries, but we have not time; the horses were actually at the door, and his lordship sensitively grateful for the particular attentions of the lovely Katharine and her disinterested

parent, and perfectly alive to all the embarrassments and anxieties of his mother, having thrown himself into the carriage followed by his travelling companion, Roberts, with Robert, the footman, mounted the rumble, and the post-boys giving the rein to their steeds, away went the noble baron and his nautical friend.

CHAPTER XV.

“ ————His eye-balls roll at death,
Behold the ling’ring soul’s convulsive strife,
His thick short breath catches at parting life.”

DRYDEN.

THE suddenness of all this proceeding, which was quite in accordance with Lord Weybridge’s wishes, and far beyond his hopes, inasmuch as his extrication from the difficulty in which he was plunged, gave the affair all the character of a dream. To MacGopus it made not the slightest difference, whether he were musing by his fire-side, reading his book, contradicting his friend, or scampering across a country at the rate of a dozen miles an hour ;—he was equally immovable, imperturbable, and philosophical.

They had proceeded three miles before either of them spoke.

“I think I’m out of *that*, Doctor?” said his lordship, breaking silence.

“Out of what, my lord?” said MacGopus.

“The scrape I got myself into last night.”

“Not you,” said the Doctor; “you’ll never get beyond the tether of your lady-mother’s apron string; your fate is fixed.”

“It seems something like an interposition of fortune in my favour,” said Lord Weybridge, “that Harbottle should express this wonderfully strong desire to see me; and still more curious is it, as it will afford me an opportunity of seeing Emma, and—”

“You must not see her,” said MacGopus; “what would be the use of ripping up old wounds, and putting the poor girl into an agitation, exciting her hopes and flattering her vanity when you have just put it out of your power to realize the promises you have made her?”

“Do you mean to say,” said Lord Weybridge, “that if I find her blameless in the affair of Mrs. Harbottle’s elopement—and I cannot but believe that the desire of her hus-

band to see me has its origin in his anxiety for her exculpation upon that point—I have any possible excuse for flinching from the fulfilment of my promise made to her friend?”

“The French Count!” said the Doctor, taking snuff, as usual.

“Hang the French Count—”

“Why didn’t you think all these things over last night,” said MacGopus; “I’ll tell you why—the Duchess’s daughter has got hold of you, and she pleases you, and amuses you, and flatters your vanity, and you had thrown over this Parson’s daughter, and had forgotten her.”

“I forget——”

“Yes, you had,” said the doctor, “forgotten her so far, that if this strange thing had not happened, you would before now have been as firmly engaged to marry Lady Katharine as you were engaged to marry the other, two months ago.—Now that circumstances have roused your mind from the repose which it has been enjoying in society to which you have become habituated, with people whose whole aim and object are to make themselves agreeable to you—you return to your senses, and every hour as you approach the scene of what you once thought hap-

piness, you will find the recollection strengthen upon you ; till at last, if you permit your feelings to get the better of you, you will go so far as to renew your offer to your first love, even although she has been the associate of a wanton wife and the willing listener to the professions of a foreign adventurer—you must not see her, George.”

“ You might as well prevent the needle pointing to the pole,” said his lordship.

“ That’s a very old simile,” said the doctor ; “ you may rely upon it, your pole, as you call it, is in another sphere.”

“ I most certainly will see Miss Lovell.”

“ You won’t.”

“ But, my dear Doctor, I tell you I will.”

“ We shall see.”

Here Lord Weybridge had recourse to his long established method of avoiding any farther altercation with his positive friend. He said no more, but throwing himself into a corner of the carriage, with a half-uttered exclamation of rage at the obstinacy of his companion, affected to sleep, MacGopus chuckling to himself at having effectually silenced his agitated companion.

This sort of discussion was occasionally renewed during the journey, which was pursued as rapidly as possible, and terminated at the door of Binford Hall, about ten o'clock at night.

When the carriage drew up, what a melancholy contrast did the appearance of things present to that which was last exhibited to George's sight ! One faint light glimmered in the Hall, and one or two peals at the bell were rung before any one appeared to open the doors. The drawing-room, once the bright centre of a brilliant circle of apartments, stood open, but dark, and the night wind whistled along the once well warmed and brightly lighted passages.

Lord Weybridge had arranged that the Doctor should proceed with the carriage to the cottage, and urge by his presence the preparations for the night's accommodation, about which Mr. Roberts, the valet, and Robert, the footman, had directions forthwith to busy themselves. — His lordship had, in the first instance, requested MacGopus to stay at the Hall ; but he peremptorily refused, from a feeling that his appearance there might create some groundless jealousy on the part of the medical

attendants, and have the air of intrusion, of which his pride and dignity could not for a moment endure the suspicion.

“How is your master?” said Lord Weybridge, to the servant who appeared.

“As bad as bad can be, sir,” replied the man; “the doctors think he can’t live out the night.”

“Tell Dr. Grover that I am here, but let him be told,” said Lord Weybridge, “so that Mr. Harbottle may not hear it.”

The servant ushered Lord Weybridge into the Library, and proceeded to do his lordship’s bidding. The Library, like the rest of the house, exhibited all the melancholy marks of desertion and neglect. The cold stillness of the room, which erst had rung with laughter, struck upon George’s heart; nor was this feeling unmingled with the recollections of the society he had enjoyed here, and the indiscretions which he had somehow to atone for at home. Every object revived his affection for Emma, and convinced him, that however agreeable the dream in which he had been slumbering away his hours at Severnstoke, the moment of awakening had arrived, and all perhaps too late.

From his reverie Lord Weybridge was aroused by the entrance into the apartment of Doctor Grover, who, after having made his excuses for taking the liberty of writing so hastily and abruptly to request his lordship's attendance, told him that he believed his unhappy patient had but a few hours to live—the ease which he at present was enjoying he believed to be only a symptom of mortification, and he felt happy that his lordship had so kindly and so speedily complied with Mr. Harbottle's anxious desire, as he evidently had something most important to disclose to him, and, as he had said over and over again, to him alone.

“Has Mrs. Harbottle been sent for?” asked Lord Weybridge.

“She has,” replied the Doctor, “and will, I know, if possible, be here—her own state of health, Mr. Lovell, who is in Mr. Harbottle's room, has informed, is so delicate, that caution was necessary in taking such a journey rapidly. However, it is a gratifying circumstance to know how anxiously her husband desires to see her.”

“Mr. Lovell is here,” you say, said Lord Weybridge.

“ Yes ; with the kindness and devotion to his duty and his friend, he has made an exertion beyond his strength, and has been conveyed hither—himself an invalid. Mr. Harbottle has appeared much more tranquil since his arrival ; indeed he has scarcely left him for the last three days.”

“ And Miss Lovell—— ?” said his lordship.

“ —Is at the Rectory : in scenes like that to which you will soon be summoned, of course she could in no degree participate : nor did we consider it prudent, under the circumstances of the case, to agitate her by more frequent accounts of the progress of the inflammation than absolutely necessary. Her care and anxiety about her father, so unused as he is to quit his home, have been quite sufficient to keep her mind painfully employed ; and we have restricted Count Montenay—whom, of course, your lordship knows—to three visits here in the day, to carry her intelligence as to how matters are going on. However, to-night, I apprehend, will close the sad history, and poor Mr. Lovell may be restored to the calm retirement of his own peaceful dwelling.”

“But Count Montenay,” said Lord Weybridge, “is”—

“I beg your Lordship’s pardon for one moment,” said Doctor Grover, “some one calls me.”

Saying which he went to the door of the room, and found the officious Popjoy, who had been sent by the patient to summon the Doctor, and to conjure Lord Weybridge, if he had arrived, to come to him instantly. He had heard the sound of wheels, when the carriage drew up to the door, and with an earnestness, amounting almost to frenzy, entreated—implored—and at last insisted that not a moment should be lost before he saw his friend, as he emphatically called his lordship.

To such a summons, under the sanction of Doctor Grover, there could be but one answer, and George followed the medical man along the lobby, which led to what was in other times Harbottle’s morning room, but in which now stood his bed; for, as has been already stated, he had never left the ground-floor of the house since Fanny’s departure. The door was opened, and George entered. All was

still—save a subdued moan, uttered by the unhappy master of the mansion.

“Who’s there?” cried Harbottle, raising himself in bed. “You—you, George—George Frederick Sheringham—!”

“Be calm, my dear friend,” said Grover.

“Be calm,” repeated Lovell.

“Calm—I can’t be calm—George—George!”

“I am here at your desire, Harbottle,” said Lord Weybridge, at the same moment taking Lovell’s hand affectionately, as he passed to the bed-side.

“I see—I see!” cried Harbottle. “Now—now—there’s no time to be lost; Doctor—Grover—all of you—go—go—leave us; you—you, Lovell, stay—go, all of you. I’ll give ye a thousand pounds to go this minute—I’ve plenty of money still—go!”

Grover beckoned his colleague and the servant who was in attendance, and they retired.

“Are they gone?—is the door shut?—quite shut—close—close—close!”

“Yes,” said Lord Weybridge; “but now let me entreat you to calm yourself.”

“It’s all over, George; let me call you

George—to-morrow I shall not be able to call you any thing—I'm dying—they know it—I know it—but I could not die in peace—in peace I cannot die even as it is—”

“ Be patient,” said Lovell, “ be calm.”

“ Oh ! Sheringham, I have sent for you—to unburthen my mind. You were my friend—I loved you—I esteemed you ; you had a regard for my wife—my poor, poor ill-used wife ! You loved Harvey—poor Harvey ! you love Emma—*his* daughter—you do—you do—I know all that.”

“ Well, but now ?” said Lovell.

“ I know—I know ;” said Harbottle, “ I'm coming to it—I cannot buy time—or breath—I have none to spare. He knows the history—Lovell knows it all, George—but he would never have told it. It is to clear my wife—my Fanny—she I was once so fond—so proud of. She's coming, though—she's to be here, George—I shall see her yet ;—give me some drink—I must speak it all yet—my tongue is parched—”

“ Why agitate yourself in this manner ?” said George, “ nobody doubts or suspects your wife, nobody —”

“ Aye, that’s it,” said Harbottle, “ but *I* did—that villain Hollis—he’s gone—it was my last act—he’s gone—last night, he went—villain—but listen: I gave the cue to the world to suspect her; she left me—fled, and Lovell’s pure good daughter went with her—she is injured by it—she is doubted and suspected. He—this good, kind, kind man, would never vindicate his child at my expense. I must—hear me, George—you will consent to be one of the executors of my will—I have done this on purpose—my wife—my wife has every thing—all I can do to atone for my conduct. Oh!—jealousy—meanness—drunkenness—”

Here again he fell back exhausted. Lovell spoke to Lord Weybridge a few words.

“ No—no,” said Harbottle, “ I have strength left for that; George—hear it—hear me—Harvey—how dare I pronounce his name—he was my friend—your friend—he—George, George,—I am his murderer!”

“ Hush! hush!” said Lovell.

“ No—hush! let it be heard—let it be heard,” said Harbottle; “ Sheringham, my friend—my once loved friend—I did not strike him to the earth—my hand was never stained

with his blood ; but his blood is upon my soul—money—money cannot buy that off.”

“ You rave, Harbottle,” said Lord Weybridge.

“ No—no ; hear me—I recollect all the circumstances—it is fit you should hear them from my lips. I went to Bradfield’s to shoot—we were out ; while we were beating a cover, Harvey, who had ridden over from Mor-daunt’s, joined us. You see I am not mad—I recollect all the circumstances. Nobody knew of our differences—not even Harvey himself was aware of the strength of my feelings. He joined us—he spoke to me—I returned his salutation. We were for an hour near each other in the field. Ten times did I feel as if I should like to shoot him on the spot.”

“ Oh for mercy’s sake !” said Lord Weybridge.

“ I killed him at last,” said Harbottle, with a horrid smile ; “ I did ! Listen—listen—hear me ; he was pressed to dine at Bradfield’s ; he assented—we dined ; we drank much wine—he saw my coldness of manner—I saw he did—there was some joke—some bet, I believe about drinking—and to rally, he drank more wine

than ever I saw him drink, but not so much as I did; yet I recollect all—the party broke up—we two were the only men going away—all the rest of the party slept in the house. He had no servant—I had none. Our horses were brought to the door together. Bradfield came out with us—we mounted and took leave of him together. Give me some drink, Lovell.”

Lord Weybridge handed him some lemonade, which he sipped.

“ We rode forward together, without speaking, for some minutes. He made an observation—I answered as I should have answered a stranger, and put my horse into a canter. He did the same—my blood was boiling—my head whirled—my heart was full of revenge, and I only cast about in my mind how to pick a quarrel with him which might have no reference to what I fancied my real grievance; but I could not, in my confusion of ideas, hit upon any thing plausible, and we cantered on till we came to the corner by Brousted Gap. There it was he broke silence, by asking me if there was not a way across the common which led into the upper road, by Mordaunt’s. The thought—the devil, I should say, glanced into my mind

at the moment ; the night was pitchy dark—
‘ Yes,’ said I, ‘ there, d’ye see yon light—ride straight for it, as straight as you can ride—that light is in the upper road.’ ‘ Good night, Harbottle,’ said Harvey ; I could not answer him—my tongue clove to my mouth.—They were the last words he ever spoke—I knew they would be, George ! He put spurs to his horse, and galloped off at my bidding. I knew what was to happen. I pulled up, and listened.—I sat in an agony of anxiety—my ears throbbed, and my heart beat—I heard the hoofs patting the turf—the sound grew fainter, but still I heard them going—it lasted but a minute. I heard a sharp cry, and then a crash—it was the headlong fall, of both man and beast, into a deep gravel-pit, which I knew lay right in his path, — there — there his mangled body was found the next morning.”

Harbottle sank on his pillow for a moment—he raised himself—

“ I hear the horrid crash and clatter now—it was momentary—not a sound—not a groan followed—all was still—I rode home as hard as I could gallop—I fancied Harvey was behind me. I smelt his blood in my nostrils, and tasted it in my throat. I came here—here—in the room over

this—I gloried in the work. I bragged of it to my wife—I did—I jeered her about Harvey, and gloried in being his murderer. She left me, George, as soon as the day dawned; was she wrong? This good, good, kind man's daughter, like a ministering angel, went with her to her aunt's. Oh! George!—I shall never see her again. She won't come — no — no — I know she won't—I dare not pray for her—no—nor for myself—yet now you know the truth; you ought to know it. Curse me not! I am not mad now!—I was mad then—raving mad!—but Fanny is innocent!—and Emma, who has been traduced, is innocent; I alone am guilty.”

“Can this be true,” said Lord Weybridge to Lovell.

“I have been till now the sole depositary of the dreadful secret,” said Lovell; “no evidence could have substantiated the fact legally; he confessed it to his wife, and she quitting him immediately, gave me that account, which he has just repeated, as the reason of her forming the sudden and immutable resolution never again to associate with him.”

“What is it you are saying?” said Harbottle. “All you can say of my guilt, say—

if it will answer any end of justice, you have my consent to publish it all.—Whatever is necessary to establish Fanny's character, let every body know; but, oh! she will not come to me, George. I would give ten—twenty thousand pounds, for one forgiving smile—one single kiss, such as she used to give me; but, no—blood!—blood!—blood! She will not come near me!”

Here he seemed to faint from exhaustion, and Lord Weybridge thought it advisable to call Dr. Grover into the room. He came: Harbottle immediately recognized him.

“You are returned, doctor,” said he.

“I merely came to see if you wanted any thing,” said Grover.

“No, no! nothing! I feel sleepy, doctor; very sleepy.”

“Indulge it, sir;” said the physician.

“Ah! nothing will avail; its all over!” said Harbottle.—“So much the better! but I am easier! I am happier, Sheringham!—shake hands with me—bear with me—bear with a repentant sinner! You and Lovell will have all my affairs to arrange; forgive the trouble I impose: it will be useful to

Fanny to have a man of your rank and character to support her—you will—I know you will—and Lovell—and his daughter. Oh! Lovell!—remember me kindly to your excellent child.”

A flood of tears here relieved the unhappy man.

“Try and sleep, sir,” said Grover; “lay your head on the pillow.”

“I will, I will,” said Harbottle. “I am sure I shall sleep!—but hear!—mind what I say—if Fanny comes—if it is one—two—three o’clock—any hour—don’t mind my sleeping—wake me—wake me, the moment she arrives. Bless her! bless her!—Now, don’t forget! promise me *that*.”

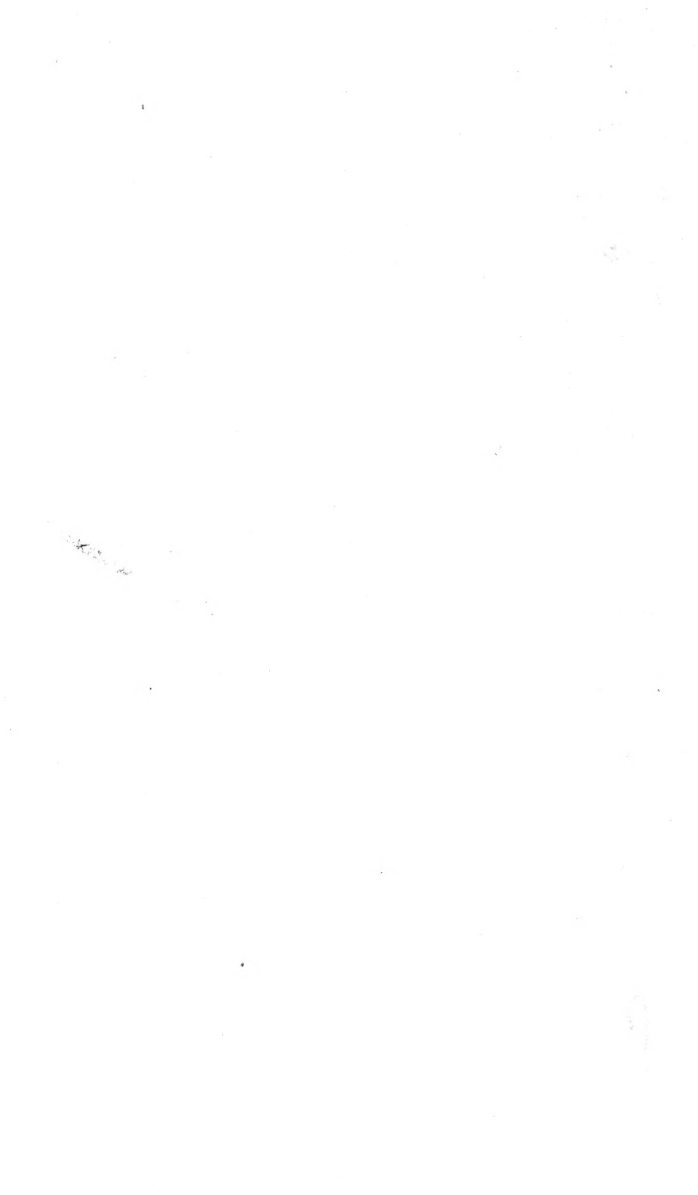
“Rely upon *me*,” said Grover.

In a few minutes, Harbottle, as he had anticipated, fell into a profound slumber.

He never woke again.

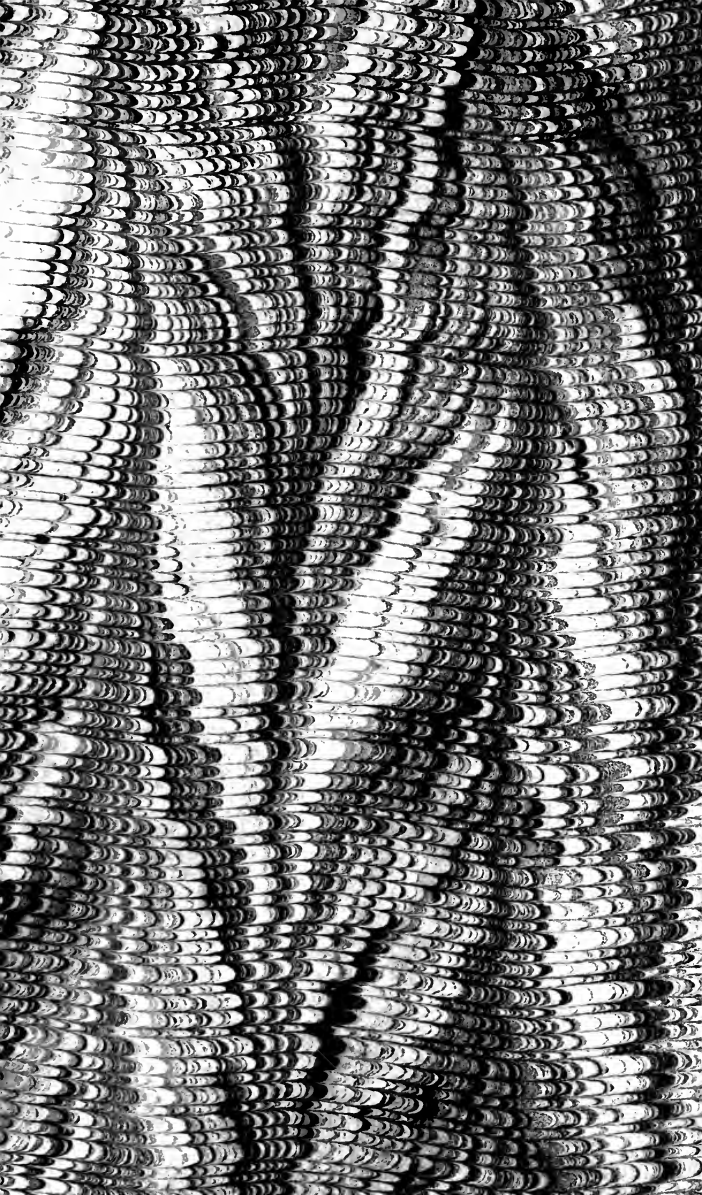
END OF VOL. II.

BAYLIS AND LEIGHTON,
JOHNSON’S COURT, FLEET STREET.









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